MIRRORING LANGUAGE:
NARCISSUS IN LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH POETRY

By

CATHERINE S. COX

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Catherine S. Cox

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Chairman: R.A. Shoaf
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The dissertation examines medieval poetic treatments of the Ovidian Narcissus as an ideological, epistemological, theological, and rhetorical figure in Pearl, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Langland's Piers Plowman B, and Henryson's Testament of Cresseid. The dissertation concerns itself with paradoxes, puns, ambiguities, and other difficult figures of language that exist at those junctures where human desire, theological doctrine, and poetic form intersect.

The first chapter, "Pearl: Tautology and Transgression," argues that the Pearl-dreamer's vision culminates in a transgressing of the boundaries of metaphor and that this transgression is linked to a paradox of self and other: the dreamer, as Narcissus, comes to recognize in God the "otherness" that has eluded him throughout the dream-vision.

The second chapter, "Chaucer's Narcissus: Troilus's Rhetoric of Errancy," argues that Chaucer's narrator uses Narcissus to supply a crucial rhetoric of errancy; this rhetoric, in turn, comments upon the paradoxical Narcissus crux, calling attention to the interplay of perversion and conversion in a text that ultimately grapples with the truth of signs and finds an "out" by comparing the pagan word and the Christian Word.

The third chapter, "Langland's Christian Narcissus: Metaphoric Collocation and the Imago Dei in Piers Plowman B," argues that a medieval synthesis of image theology and metaphoric self-consciousness is manifest in the complex figure of the Christian Narcissus, for Narcissus (exemplified by the dreamer-Will) provides a rhetoric of comparison for reading the poetry as a text self-aware and critically conscious of its own metaphoric processes.

The final chapter, "'Imprentit in the Fantasy': Self-Reflexive Metaphors of Making in Henryson's Testament," argues that Henryson uses narcissistic instances of seeing, reflecting, and mirroring to call attention to the paradoxical comparisons upon which metaphor is contingent. Ultimately, the Testament argues that while metaphor is contingent upon comparison and measurement, interpretation is colored by varying modes of perception deriving from self-reflexivity.

INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE AND MIRROR

This dissertation examines medieval poetic treatments of the Ovidian Narcissus as an ideological, rhetorical, theological, and epistemological figure. Through the study of four texts--Pearl, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Langland's Piers Plowman B, and Henryson's Testament of Cresseid--the dissertation explores a medieval poetics of reference, of mirror and language, informed by Ovidian mythography, participating in the Pauline/Augustinian theological traditions, and articulated in terms of self-reflexive language. The dissertation aims to explore figures of language that call attention to their own processes, occasioned by crucial textual junctures of intersecting semantic possibilities; the individual analyses employ a critical framework that illuminates both texts and readings through their contemporary contexts while calling attention to the structures of thought and process that inform not only the specific texts themselves but ways of approaching them as well.

The Narcissus myth for the Middle Ages begins, of course, with the Ovidian Narcissus, specifically the second of the two parts of Ovid's Narcissus myth.[1] The

episode of Narcissus at the fons supplies a crucial instance of mirroring that is in turn reflected in the work of medieval poets. Following the episode of Echo, Narcissus encounters his paradoxical "other" at the fons and, in the midst of erotic longing, discovers an epistemological paradox: self and other, sameness and difference, image and substance, res and imago.[2] Narcissus experiences a crisis of distinction, a blurring of the boundaries of self and other: ". . . visae correptus imagine formae spem sine corpore amat; corpus putat esse, quod unda est" [". . . for he saw an image in the pool, and fell in love with that unbodied hope, and found a substance in what was only shadow"] (416-7). The crux of a "Narcissus episode"--both the original Ovidian myth and its subsequent medieval appearances as intertext--is in recognizing the paradoxical interplay of the reflected image and its origin.

It is important, too, to note that while the familiar Narcissus myth, that of the young man falling in love with his reflection, derives from the Ovidian text, a crucial portion of that text is often omitted in re-tellings of the myth: Narcissus's recognition of his own paradox. Although Narcissus initially confuses image and other without realizing the distinction that the narrator provides--

credule, quid frustra simulacra fugacia captas?
quod petis, est nusquam; quod amas, avertere, perdes.
ista repercussae, quam cernis, imaginis umbra est.
nil habet ista sui. (432-5)

[Why try to catch an always fleeing image,
Poor credulous youngster? What you seek is nowhere,
And if you turn away, you will take with you
The boy you love. The vision is only shadow,
Only reflection, lacking any substance.]

--he comes to identify the paradox, to understand the source of the "other" and to accept his own role as the source of his pining: "iste ego sum; sensi, nec me mea fallit imago. uror amore mei, flammas moveoque feroque" ["He is myself! I feel it, / I know my image now. I burn with love / Of my own self; I start the fire I suffer"] (3.463-4).

Of course, knowing the source of the "other" does not alleviate Narcissus's suffering, and he chooses to die:[3] "nunc duo concordes anima moriemur in una" ["we two shall perish in one breath"] (473); but what is significant about the recognition is that while Narcissus chooses the easy solution, his attempting to come to terms with his quandary calls attention to the complex interrelationships inhering in any instance of doubling, or duality. In other words, Narcissus's paradox is that he loves an "other" which is really a facet of his own "self," and then, upon recognition, loves his "self" that is actually a representation of "otherness."[4] There is, for Narcissus, no means of reconciling the paradox, but his

self-awareness of the dynamics of his paradoxical obsession provides a crucial figure for epistemological exploration. The medieval poets are acutely aware of the significance of the recognition scene and its implications for language processes, and thus incorporate the figure in an apparent attempt to explore other complex, ambiguous, and paradoxical figures. For them, the figure of self-reflection (i.e., scrutinizing the self within some context or towards some end) is inextricably linked to the figure of self-reflexion (i.e., the subject is also object, as in the core narcissistic assertion, "I love myself").

The medieval fascination with Ovid's Narcissus--in terms of morality, psychology, epistemology, and hermeneutics--is extensive and well-documented. Early summaries of and commentaries on Ovid's Metamorphoses appear during the 5th and 6th centuries, including the anonymous Narrationes, significant for its distinction between diligere and amor sui (i.e., love in the sense of esteem and appreciation and love of self). The first major commentary appears in the twelfth century, written by Arnulf of Orleans, Allegoriae super Ovidii Metamorphosin, which Kenneth Knoespel describes as "a pragmatic pedagogical device useful in guiding the formulation of sense and controlling evolving interpretation" (35). The thirteenth century commentaries

include John of Garland's Integumenta super Ovidium Metamorphoseos, and the fourteenth century, Giovanni del Virgilio's Allegorie librorum Ovidii Metamorphoseos, Pierre Bersuire's Ovidus moralizatus, and, perhaps most signficant in terms of literary influence, the anonymous French Ovide moralisé, a paraphrase and moralization of Ovid's Metamorphoses that "contains a good bit of apparently original interpretation. . . .[T]he influence of it and its progeny seems to have been tremendous, thus making it in itself a plausible source of tradition for later literary works" (Kaske 124-5).

Guillaume de Lorris uses the Narcissus mythography in the first part of the thirteenth-century Roman de la Rose[5] (as will Jean de Meun in the second), supplying a brief summary of the Narcissus myth with an added didactic that ladies take the story as a warning not to "neglect" their men. The Narcissus commentary is followed by a passage in which Amans--the lover--looks into the mirror of Narcissus and sees the Rose of his desire, reflected in the crystals (eyes?) that he observes in the fountain/mirror. Thus Amans not only asserts an understanding of the Narcissus paradox, but then likewise succumbs to a self-generated desire as well; he sees in the crystals an image of desire, generated by his own perception and informed by his own understanding of the Narcissus crux.[6]

In using the Narcissus myth/ography as a means of informing Amans's vision, Guillaume suggests a crucial link between the language of Narcissus and the language of fin' amors,[7] for the language of Narcissus inheres in any intertextual narcissistic moment; Narcissus's words are present even by their absence. The source of suffering is implicitly the self that suffers--the lover who eroticizes his suffering and who pines for an image of desire participates in a narcissistic episode (i.e., an episode that parallels the Ovidian crisis). The Narcissus episode supplies fin' amors language with a lexicon of eros that is itself both reflective and reflecting. In other words, the language of the fin' amors register is in part the language of narcissistic pining. Narcissus is the figure that links eros and language in textual terms; he is at once a sign of both eros and language and he represents the challenge that each poses to the other.

Dante, too, comments on this duality in the Paolo and Francesca episode of Inferno,[8] where Francesca notes,

> Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto
> di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
> soli eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto.
> Per più fïate li occhi ci sospinse
> quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
> ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.
> Quando leggemmo il disïato riso
> esser basciato da cotanto amante,
> questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
> la bocca mi bascio tutto tremante.
> Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:
> quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.
> (5.127-38)

> [One day, to pass the time away, we read
> Of Lancelot--how love had overcome him.
> We were alone, and we suspected nothing.
> And time and time again that reading led
> our eyes to meet, and made our faces pale,
> and yet one point alone defeated us.
> When we had read how the desired smile
> was kissed by one who was so true a lover,
> this one, who never shall be parted from me,
> while all his body trembled, kissed my mouth.
> A Gallehaut indeed, that book and he
> who wrote it, too; that day we read no more.]

Through Francesca's words, Dante aligns the act of reading with seduction; the book is a "Galeotto," a mediator, bringing together two lovers who would otherwise remain apart; they are seduced by the text. Moreover, Paolo and Francesca attempt to duplicate the eros of the passage that they read; in imitating the text, Paolo and Francesca, too, participate in narcissistic pining: they desire to desire, and attempt to re/produce erotic experience based on self-generated readings, readings "vital to this dynamic of passion" (Gellrich 149). The text is a mediation of desire, prompting Paolo and Francesca to engage in narcissistic desire; unaware of or complacent about the potential consequences, they allow themselves to be seduced, to convert into eros.

Dante's treatment of the dual--that is, the complex relationship of the two items that coincide--suggests as well an inverted parallel of the conversion episode of Augustine's Confessions, a text that likewise links eros and language. Augustine's conversion is a turning away

from eros, articulated in terms of reading, initiated by the child's voice which directs him to the text: "Tolle, legge, tolle, legge" ["Take it and read, take it and read"].[9] After reading Paul's directive--

> non in comissationibus et ebrietatibus, non cubilibus et impudicitiis, non in contentione et aemulatione; sed induite Dominum Iesum Christum et carnis curam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis. (Rom 13.13-14)
> [Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites.]

--Augustine has no desire to read more and no need to do so, his reading having sufficiently effected his turning away from carnal sin.[10]

For Augustine, as well as for Dante and for the English poets whose work is clearly informed by their study of Augustine and Dante, eros and language constitute a duality crucial to one's understanding of language. Eros and language are inextricably linked in medieval thought; to write or speak of one is to write or speak of the other, and any understanding of one is contingent in part upon one's understanding of the other.[10] The Narcissus image represents the duality and the perplexities that this duality entails.

The relevance of Augustine's Confessions to Narcissus's role as a medieval poetic figure introduces another important contemporary context for the study of medieval poetics, theology. The language of theology and

the language of poetics are closely linked in poetry throughout the Middle Ages. Both are concerned with problems of signification, a concern that not only informs the texts but which forms them as well. Medieval poetry is largely aware of its own processes; that is, it has an internal critical consciousness, a self-reflexive awareness of its own form and method. In many respects, the language of medieval theology is the language of what is now called "literary criticism."[11]

To appreciate the medieval poets' exploration of language and their attempts to define for themselves its processes, one must first acknowledge the tremendous impact of Augustine's readings of Paul's epistles on the formulation of what may be described as the critical consciousness inhering in the work of the medieval Christian poets. Augustine's concern with signification not only supplies the medieval poets with a system of coming to terms with problems of theology deriving from scriptural cruces, but also provides them with a lexicon of critical awareness, a means of exploring, defining, and expressing the paradoxical processes of language.

The link between eros and language explored by Augustine in his reading of the Pauline anti-carnal directive leads him to a language theory extensively based on Pauline theology. In De Doctrina Christiana, Augustine

notes,

> For at the outset, you must be very careful lest you take figurative expressions literally. What the Apostle says pertains to this problem: "For the letter killeth, but the spirit quicketh." That is, when that which is said figuratively is taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally. Nor can anything more appropriately be called the death of the soul than that condition in which the thing that distinguishes us from beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in pursuit of the letter. (III.v.9)

Paul's association of carnality and literalness provides a metaphor of metaphoricity; that is, it describes metaphoric processes by means of metaphoric process--Paul uses a turning or troping of language to convey the necessity of such turnings and tropings, couched in theological language and to an explicit theological end.

But while Paul's immediate purpose is ostensibly to enlighten the Christian reader as to the significance of the New Law, Augustine's study of Paul's writings provides a system of language study, a language model that informs medieval poetics as much as it informs medieval theology. Augustine, following Paul, warns against the sins of carnality; he suggests celibacy and moderation as constraints against excess sex, food, and drink. Clearly, Augustine's conversion is based upon his turning away from carnality and turning towards Pauline theology. But just as Augustine advocates Paul's anti-carnal directive in terms of physical, carnal excesses, he likewise advocates Paul's anti-carnal directive in terms of language; in

other words, Augustine argues for a turning away from carnality and, in doing so, calls attention to the very polysemy of language that Paul's directive insists upon. In short, Augustine, following Paul, uses "carnal" metaphorically to argue for metaphoricity.

Augustine further develops his language model in terms of the "proper"; that is, he designates language by means of what is "proper" and "improper," based upon what is "literal" and "figurative." The signum proprium signifies literally, and the signum translatum signifies figuratively; that which is "proper" is "literal" and that which is "improper," or "transferred," is figurative. Thus in order to understand metaphor as medieval theologians, philosophers, and poets would have understood it and effectively used it--as usurpative and polysemous--an understanding of proper and improper, literal and figurative is needed.[12] Further, Augustine recognizes that in dealing with property, one must likewise deal with appropriation: "metaphora est usurpata translatio," notes Augustine. Here, Augustine defines "metaphor" as a usurpation, an appropriation of meaning in a context of polysemous signification. He recognizes, too, the arbitrariness of metaphor and reading as well: "impositio ad placitum." There is, suggests Augustine, pleasure in the text and that pleasure is used to motivate and to provoke thinking and reading.

In a context of Pauline metaphor, then, Augustine's attention to figurative language asserts Paul's anti-carnal directive and insists upon a dynamics of polysemous signification if language is to mean; as Dante notes in the epistle to Can Grande, ". . . it should be understood that there is not just a single sense in this work: it might rather be called polysemous, that is, having several senses" (Miller 81). Of course any act of reading is thus based on the reader's ability and willingness to judge semantic competition, to determine after making a comparison which meaning should obtain.

The implicit comparison suggested by Augustine's insistence upon the proper/improper, carnal/spiritual, literal/figurative signification designations also plays a crucial role in medieval poetics and epistemology. Although the concept of "epistemology by contraries," i.e., by comparing an item and its opposite, has its roots in the ancients, Augustine's treatment of sign theory provides the Middle Ages with a new context in which to align the items. The medieval poets had at their disposal an epistemology based not only on core duality, but on the relationship of the compared items in terms of language and signification processes. This epistemology is aptly described by Jean de Meun in the Roman de la Rose:

> Ainsinc va des contreres choses,
> les unes sunt des autres gloses;

et qui l'une an veust definit,
de l'autre li doit souvenir,
ou ja, par nule antancion,
n'i metra diffinicion;
car qui des .II. n'aconnoissance,
ja n'i connoistra differeance,
san quoi ne peut venir en place
diffinicion que l'an face. (21543-52)

[Thus things go by contraries; one is the gloss of the other. If one wants to define one of the pair, he must remember the other, or he will never, by any intention, assign a definition to it; for he who has no understanding of the two will never understand the difference between them, and without this difference no definition that one may make can come to anything.]

This epistemology seems simple, but deceptively so; Jean's emphasis on "difference" and his concern with comparison underlies much of medieval thought and poetics. Indeed, comparison--ratio--governs much of poetic processes and is paradigmatic of metaphoricity itself.

Augustine uses comparison to express his concerns regarding epistemology and its relationship to image theology, i.e., paradoxes of creation doctrine, the comparison of God and man, and the semantic implications of Word and word. Augustine's treatment of image theology also informs medieval poetics, particularly in conjunction with Narcissus mythography; the two are joined in a complex treatment of the Narcissus paradox informed by the core paradox of self and other inhering in the imago Dei, the "image of God."

Dante recognizes the relationship between Narcissus and the imago Dei and articulates its paradoxical

complexity in the closing lines of the Commedia:

> O luce etterna che sola in te sidi,
> sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta
> e intendente te ami e arridi!
> Quella circulazion che sì concetta
> pareva in te come lume reflesso,
> da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,
> dentro da sé, del suo colore stesso,
> mi parve pinta de la nostra effige:
> per che 'l mio viso in lei tutto era messo.
> (Par.33.124-32)

> [Eternal Light, You only dwell within
> Yourself, and only You know You; Self-knowing,
> Self-known, You love and smile upon Yourself!
> That circle--which, begotten so, appeared
> in You as light reflected--when my eyes
> had watched it with attention for some time,
> within itself and colored like itself,
> to me seemed painted with our effigy,
> so that my sight was set on it completely.]

Dante, again following Augustine, comments on the paradoxical nature of writing about writing, of attempting to codify and to verbalize that which cannot be codified and yet which must be if it is to be communicated. Dante, like Augustine, recognizes the inadequacy of language and, at the same time, that its instrumentality cannot be duplicated by other means. Significantly, Dante articulates his comments in terms of Narcissus-like mirroring, linking together writing and reflection, self and other.

Dante's closing lines reflect a concern with the paradoxical plurality of God and man's relationship to the triune deity. Moreover, the gesture described as Dante looks into the circle and sees "nostre effige" underscores

the link between the imago Dei and the "doubled" Narcissus. Dante, like other theologians, recognizes that there is a justifiable self-love manifest in the contemplation (or "speculation") necessary to the vision of God; that turning inward, however closely it follows the error of Narcissus, must ultimately avoid Narcissus's final peril.[13] In other words, self-reflection as part of spiritual contemplation requires an initial narcissistic gesturing but must lead to a conversion--a turning away from the self and towards the other--rather than a self-perversion or self-seduction. Augustine's own concern with the plural unity of the triune Deus is expressed in Confessions:

> Again, you do not say "Let man be made" but Let us make man. You do not say "Let us make him according to his kind" but Wearing our own image and likeness. . . . It is because you are the Trinity that you speak in the plural when you say Let us make man; yet in the next verse, which says God made man, the singular is used; and the phrase: Wearing our own image and likeness, in which the plural is used, is followed by the words in his own image, where you speak in the singular. This is how, when we learn to know God, we become new men in the image of our Creator. (XIII.22)

Here, Augustine underscores the relationship of image theology and language, focusing his questions not just on the plural deity, but on the plural deity's expression of its own plurality, e.g., "Faciamus," "Let us make."

More important, perhaps, in terms of language theory and epistemology, Augustine turns his attention towards human psychology in a context of the imago Dei in De

trinitate. Here, Augustine develops at length a trinitarian model of psychology based on human reflection or representation of the divine; "the thesis of the De trinitate is that man, since he is made in the image of God, can learn about God by examining himself" (Colish, Mirror 50). Augustine's trinitarian models are based on a desire for religious knowledge and an interest in understanding the role of love; Augustine does not set out to present a language model. However, his trinitarian models are useful in formulating an understanding of knowledge and language within a context of Christian theology.[14] Augustine, then, clearly sees a connection between human love, human self-love, and the desire for God; moreover, he clearly understands an analogous relationship between human psychology and the Trinity and uses this analogy to understand the complex relationship of language and God. Thus for the medieval Christian poets, Augustine's work provides an exciting forum for exploring issues of language and thought. In addition, it provides a rhetoric of representation, evoking "beyond its specific content and by virtue of the very logic of its articulation, the intricate intertwining of the three aspects of psychic life: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real" (Kristeva, In the Beginning 43). The Trinity and the language developed to describe both it and its analogies

in human thought processes provide a means of framing poetic treatments of similar theme in a context of consciousness and awareness. That is, the medieval poet could frame language exploration in a context of the symbolic, the imagined, and the real by setting up a frame that transgresses the "real" while defining it as symbolic and imagined; he could use mystical experience, the dream-vision, and other, similar forms of altered consciousness to mediate layers of representation and signification.

The specular relationship between theology, epistemology, and poetics is perhaps best articulated by Paul:

> Videmus enim nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem; nunc cognosco ex parte, tunc autem cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum. (1Cor.13.12)
>
> [We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.]

Paul's image at once comments upon the role of specular images, self-knowledge, and the relationship of God and man. In addition, the role of speculum serves as a reminder that any act of reflection/reflexion is necessarily colored by modes of perception, that "seeing" is subjective.[15]

Moreover, the image of the dark glass is used in medieval Christian thought informing the idea of the Book, i.e., the Book of God's Word (Bible) and the Book of Creation (nature). The role of mirroring in relation to

the idea of the "Book" is an important one, for there is in the Middle Ages an "attempt to gather all strands of learning together into an enormous Text . . . that would mirror the historical and transcendental orders just as the Book of God's Word (the Bible) was a speculum of the Book of his Work (nature)" (Gellrich 18).[16] Hence the epistemology of mirroring is inextricably linked to language and its processes, however obscure or ambiguous.[17] Language--the text--thus provides for an epistemology by mirroring, or reflection.

The text supplies the instrumentality of reflection whereby the reader can find the paradoxical "otherness" that is generated by his own self, even as that "otherness" is vicarious; the enlightened reader can look into the text and, through the instrumentality of reflexivity, come to some understanding of those things which he himself has not experienced or has experienced but not fully understood. As Dante notes,

> Transumanar significar per verba
> non si poria; però l'essemplo basti
> a cui esperienza grazia serba. (Par.1.70-72)
>
> [The passing beyond humanity may not be set forth in words: therefore, let the example suffice any for whom grace reserves the experience. (Singleton)]

Here, Dante affirms the role of substitute that the text fulfills, even as he notes the impossibility for the text to express fully the magnitude of the experience--he

realizes that while language is inadequate, it is the only available means of communicating the experience; thus how language signifies and how one interprets become of the utmost concern for Dante, as for Augustine.

Augustine and Dante are not the only language theorists informing medieval poetics, of course, but their impact can hardly be overemphasized; their explorations of signification processes are important not only for the conclusions made but, more important, because they grapple with these issues using the very medium that perplexes them so; they write about writing. Other language theorists help shape medieval poetics, particularly as pertaining to the ubiquitous mirror-motif found in theological, philosophical, political, and poetic texts, "the faithful reflection of another space or another text" (Leupin 139). Geoffrey of Vinsauf, however, in the Poetria nova, "subverts this mimetic principle governing the strict reproduction of cosmological, historical, and divine orders by turning the mirror into a space free of mimetism's constraints" (139). For Geoffrey, and for later poets influenced by his thinking, mirroring works not merely as reflection, but as an informed reflection; that is, there is reflection "in a new strangeness"; "Geoffroi's mirror is the symbol and organizing principle of a general economy of writing; more specifically, the

specular image in his treatise both represents and provides for the text's construction" (139).

Laurie Finke and Martin Shictman, in their introduction to Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers, note that

> Contemporary readers never experience medieval texts directly, unambiguously, or ahistorically. Their reading is always mediated in highly complex ways by the scholarly activities that make these texts accessible: the editions, glosses, textual notes, manuscript facsimilies, transcriptions, and translations through which medieval literature is filtered and transmitted. (1)

One of the mediators of medieval studies is critical theory; contemporary readers of medieval texts can hardly avoid modern theory and, indeed, as Finke and Shictman indicate, "the study of the Middle Ages can and must contribute, in significant ways, to ongoing discussions of literary theory" (11). Along similar lines, Eugene Vance comments in his preface to Mervelous Signals,

> There is scarcely a term, practice, or concept in contemporary theory that does not have some rich antecedent in medieval thought, and I believe more firmly than ever that familiarity with the older culture can help us better to "think" the new. (xii)

This is not to say, of course, that modern theory is merely a repackaging or reiteration of what was already invented in the Middle Ages, nor is it an advocation of reading medieval texts excluding their own contemporary contexts in favor of the reader's own. The comments made by Finke, Shictman, and Vance, however, speak to the crucial role of critical theory--both medieval and

modern--that necessarily informs any contemporary study of a medieval text.

The four dissertation chapters that follow adhere to this line of thinking; I have attempted to provide a close reading of each text within the historical, theological, and philosophical contexts of its own time.[18] At the same time I have not hesitated to draw upon the further contexts made available by twentieth-century thought. As a twentieth century reader reading fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts, my readings are obviously informed by contexts contemporary to my act of reading, if not to the readings themselves.

The emphasis throughout the dissertation is on the plurality and multiplicity of meaning generated by language cruces; that is, the many and varied possibilities inhering in any single moment of perception produce the necessary yet perplexing competition of meanings existing in the semantics of language, and the "reflexivity" of the language calls attention to its own process. The concerns treated by the dissertation chapters are those dealing with paradoxes, ambiguities, puns, and other difficult figures that exist at those junctures where human desire, theological doctrine, and poetic form intersect.

The first chapter, "Pearl: Tautology and Transgression," argues that the Pearl-dreamer's vision culminates in a transgressing of the boundaries of metaphor and that this transgression is linked to a paradox of self and other: the dreamer, as Narcissus, comes to recognize in God the "otherness" that has eluded him throughout the dream-vision. For the Pearl-dreamer, narcissism underlies self-understanding, since one must become an interpreter of himself before one can become an interpreter for himself. The Pearl-poet's treatment of Narcissus ultimately exemplifies a poetics of reference articulated in terms of transgression.

The second chapter, "Chaucer's Narcissus: Troilus's Rhetoric of Errancy," argues that Chaucer's narrator uses Narcissus to supply a crucial rhetoric of errancy; this rhetoric, in turn, comments upon the paradoxical Narcissus crux (of distinguishing self and other, same and different, image and substance), calling attention to the interplay of perversion and conversion in a text that ultimately grapples with the "truth" of signs and finds an "out" by comparing the pagan word and the Christian Word.

The third chapter, "Langland's Christian Narcissus: Metaphoric Collocation and the Imago Dei in Piers Plowman B," argues that a medieval synthesis of image theology and metaphoric self-consciousness is manifest in the complex figure of the Christian Narcissus, for Narcissus (as

exemplified by the dreamer-Will) provides a rhetoric of comparison for reading the poetry as a text self-aware and critically conscious of its own metaphoric processes.

The final chapter, "'Imprentit in the Fantasy': Self-Reflexive Metaphors of Making in Henryson's Testament of Cresseid," argues that Henryson uses narcissistic instances of seeing, reflecting, and mirroring to call attention to the paradoxical comparisons upon which metaphor is contingent. Ultimately, the Testament argues that while metaphor is contingent upon comparison and measurement (equivalences), interpretation is colored by varying modes of perception deriving from self-reflexivity.

In discussing each of the poems, I have attempted to establish relevant contemporary contexts in order to illuminate the text in its time. Contexts, however, like the texts themselves, are subject to interpretation; they are themselves reflexive. It is no more possible to speak of "the medieval way of thinking" than to speak of "the contemporary way of thinking"; to do either is to ignore plurality and mulitiplicity as they inhere not only in the written word but in the systems of thought structures that generate those words. Thus, the following four chapters, as they offer readings that attempt to grapple with semantic quandaries, will doubtless produce further

questions of their own. Therefore, I have attempted to participate in the "critical conversation" of each, fully aware that attempting to develop critical responses necessarily entails opening further critical questions. My own frame of argument, then, is as easily transgressed as it is transgressing.

Notes

[1]Ovid's Narcissus myth comprises two distinct sections: Echo and Narcissus (3.339-401) and Narcissus at the fons (3.402-510); the dissertation concerns itself with the second. The texts cited in this chapter are the Bristol Classical Press edition of Metamorphoses III and the translated edition by Humphries.

[2]The paradox here is that of image and origin: that which is an image but which has origin yet is not the origin of which it is an image. For Narcissus, the reflected image in the fons is his own, and yet he cannot "own" it; it derives from himself as origin, and yet while it is not his own, nor is it an "other." The transposition of left and right in the reflected image calls attention immediately to the paradoxical relationship of image and origin: while the reflection represents the origin, it obviously is not identical. For further commentary on this passage, see Brenkman; M. Taylor, Erring 29-32; Kristeva, Tales 103-21.

[3]See Kristeva, Black Sun 19-20 on the erotization of suffering and its relation to the Narcissus myth, and Tales 107-109 on auto-eroticism and the link between Narcissus and Plotinus.

[4]Narcissus is, of course, a significant figure in contemporary psychoanalytic discourse, for which "self" and "other" carry connotations not intentionally utilized in this dissertation; see, for instance, Freud; Lacan; Levine and Kravis; Wyschogrod et al.; Sugarman, esp. 128-47; Ragland-Sullivan 1-67.

[5]See 1425-1680, 20405-24 and 20859-88. Texts cited in this introduction are the Lecoy edition and the Dahlberg translation.

[6]Relevant commentary on this passage includes Goldin; Eberle; Ferrante.

[7]See also Reiss, "Medieval Sense"; Kelly; Hult.

[8]Text cited is Mandelbaum edition and Mandelbaum translation, unless otherwise noted as the Singleton translation.

[9]Relevant commentary on Augustine informing my own thinking on Augustine includes Hawkins; McMahon, "Text-Work; McMahon, Prayerful Ascent; Bell; O'Donovan; Montgomery; Miles; Vance, "Language"; Vance, "Poetics of Law"; Colish, Mirror. See also K. Taylor on the relationship of Augustine's conversion and the Francesca episode in Dante's Inferno.

[10]Freccero notes,

> Ever since Augustine, the Middle Ages insisted upon a link between eros and language, between the reaching out in desire for what mortals can never possess and the reaching out of language toward the significance of silence. . . . The search for the self which is the quest of the poet can only be accomplished through the mediation of the imagination, the Narcissus image which is at once an image of the self and all that the self is not. ("Medusa" 130)

[11]Vance comments,

> Medieval theoreticians of language rarely lost sight, however, of ontological, psychological, and pragmatic aspects of verbal signification. . . . No important medieval literary text lacks an awareness of language, whether as a medium of consciousness or as the living expression of social order. (Preface xi)

[12]See Colish, Mirror 42 and Shoaf, Currency of the Word 33-34.

[13]See Shoaf, Currency of the Word 21.

[14]Colish notes,

> The interplay of love and knowledge is Augustine's point of departure for his third Trinitarian analogy, that of memoria, intellectus, and voluntas. In practice, he observes, the memory, the intellect, and the will operate in and through each other; and the

soul knows and loves itself through all of them. . . . With the memory, the soul remembers that it has memory, intellect, and will. With the intellect, the soul knows that it knows, remembers, and wills. With the will, the soul wills to will, to know, and to remember. Each faculty independently is hence fully equal to the other two, and each as a whole is equal to all three taken together. Thus, concludes Augustine, the three are one: one life, one soul, one essence. (Mirror 50)

See also Yates 27-49.

[15]Edward Nolan comments,

The term [speculum] denotes not only an instrument, but almost always, and almost immediately, a correlative function of extraordinary metaphorical potential as well. Mirroring reveals itself at once both as activity and as sign, with significations ranging from experiencing self-consciousness to the processes involved in thinking itself; from the typological functioning of intertextuality to the processes of typology itself; from the means by which we acquire knowledge to the ontological relationships obtaining in cosmic time between the human and the divine. (11)

[16]Gellrich notes,

Although Augustine began with a distinction between writing and the celestial Book, medieval reflections on the boundary line between them seem fascinated by the presence of one in the other. (35)

[17]Jeffrey comments,

Though creation is a dark glass, it is, nevertheless, a glass: something through which we can see. Man is invited, in medieval Christian thought, to taste and to see, to compare, to evaluate, to read, to interpret, and then to grow toward understanding. That is, granted his middleness, he is invited to begin where he is in the middle, and to come by exploration and discovery to a place where, by reference to another text, he can read and affirm the design of the Book which is written, not merely his own small part in one limited chapter. (6)

[18]My own understanding of medieval contexts has been shaped in part by a number of texts; these include, for economics, LeGoff, Time, Work, Culture and LeGoff, Your Money; for Church history, Southern, Pantin, Baldwin; for scholastic tradition, Piltz, Murphy, Wagner, Knowles, Murray.

PEARL: TAUTOLOGY AND TRANSGRESSION

In the final stanza of Pearl, the Pearl-dreamer comments on how he perceives his relationship with God: "For I haf founden Hym, boþ day and naȝte, a God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyin" (1203-4). The Pearl-dreamer's curious use of the label "frende" constitutes an interpretive crux, for it questions in what sense God is the Pearl-dreamer's "friend," and more important, on what basis the Pearl-dreamer assigns the label. The hermeneutic implications of the label are complex, for the Pearl-dreamer here demonstrates his capacity for interpretation, revealed--or "un-hidden"--to him owing to his dream-experience with the Pearl-maiden. Although this capacity is unrecognized by the Pearl-dreamer throughout the dream-vision, the Pearl-dreamer demonstrates in his final comments that he has become his own interpreter. Transgression, in the sense that it describes interpretation,[1] is the means by which the Pearl-dreamer arrives at this conclusion, a transgression which is, I propose, coupled with an inhering and necessary narcissism.

In order for the Pearl-dreamer to learn from his dream, "un-hiding"--in the sense of ἀπο-κάλυπτειν,[2] or unveiling/re-veiling in order to reveal what is there but has

been hidden--must be applied to himself as well as to the discourse of the Pearl-maiden. In other words, he must learn to uncover what is hidden after first acknowledging that it is, indeed, hidden or veiled. As she attempts to expound to him the theological cruces which generate the points of argumentat that he debates with himself, so she attempts to demonstrate to the dreamer that he must un-hide what is there and understand it not only in terms of superficial sight, but also in terms of interpretation.

In other words, the Pearl-maiden attempts to impress upon the dreamer the importance of un-hiding himself; he must accept that there is a gap between seeing and un-hiding, sameness and difference, literal and metaphoric, and, ultimately, believing and understanding. Only after the gap is defined can it then be trans-gressed,[3] in the sense that a trans-gression is a stepping-across of a boundary; to trans-gress is to step across, to go beyond, to cross over and, in this sense, it is a bridging of hermeneutic gaps.

The Pearl-maiden attempts to teach the Pearl-dreamer to recognize metaphor, or, more specifically, to reach understanding by means of interpretation rather than visual perception. Thus the Pearl-dreamer's desire to cross the stream comes to fruition in the final section of the poem, but the crossing, or trans-gressing, is of the boundaries

of metaphor, not the stream itself. Throughout the poem, at stake in the Pearl-dreamer's desire to cross the stream is metaphoricity; the stream suggests the boundary which must be crossed if the dreamer is to attain the lesson that the Pearl-maiden offers. The Pearl-dreamer, of course, fails to recognize the inhering metaphoricity in the boundaries of the very stream he desires to cross, for he is driven by a desire to be with the Pearl-maiden rather than a desire to interpret her words.

Interestingly enough, the Pearl-dreamer himself notes that the stream is a place of boundaries, or divisions:

> More of wele watz in þat wyse
> þen I cowþe telle þaȝ I tom hade,
> For vrþely herte myȝt not suffyse
> To þe tenþe dole of þo gladnez glade.
> For þy I þoȝt þat paradyse
> Watz þer ouer gayn þo bonkez brade;
> I hoped þe water were a deuyse
> Bytwene myrþez by merez made;
> Byȝonde þe broke, by slente oþer slade,
> I hoped þat mote merked wore.
> Bot þe water watz depe, I dorst not wade,
> And euer me longed ay more and more. (133-44)

Although the Pearl-dreamer cannot yet appreciate the hermeneutic potential of the stream, he at least is able to recognize that the stream represents a boundary, or division. He will come to recognize that the boundary exists not only as an obstacle, but also as a place of trans-gression, or trans-gressing, and thus also of deeper insight; moreover, he will come to realize that trans-gressing, like any "sin" can be understood as "a turning to

the self to the exclusion of the Other--a gesture identical with that of Narcissus" (Shoaf, Currency of the Word 27).

Moreover, the stream is for the Pearl-dreamer the locus of transcendence, where he will trans-gress his own identity. The boundary that the Pearl-dreamer must cross can be compared to the Old Testament ford of Jaboc, where Jacob trans-gresses his identity:

> . . . Nequaquam, inquit, Iacob amplius appellabitur nomen tuum, sed Israel: quoniam certasi cum Deo et cum hominibus et praevaluisti!
>
> Interrogavit eum Iacob: "Dic mihi, quo appellaris nomine?" Respondit: "Cur quaeris nomen meum?". Et benedixit ei in eodem loco.
>
> [. . . Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel; for if thou hast been strong against God, how much more shalt thou prevail against men?
>
> Jacob answered him, Tell me by what name art thou called? He answered: Why dost thou ask my name? And he blessed him in the same place. (Gen 32.28-29)]

Jacob becomes Israel by trans-gressing his own name; he becomes vir videns deum (Shoaf, "Transgression" 157-8). The Pearl-dreamer will likewise come to realize that trans-gression and transcendence are inextricably linked, and that the distinction between the two can only be identified after the act. Hence the naming of sin (or trans-gression in its sense of crossing the boundaries of God's law) as felix culpa: one goes through sin to the recognition of God's grace.[4]

Crossing the stream is therefore, for the Pearl-dreamer, not only a rash act of desire incited by sight, but also an act of trans-gression in terms of metaphoricity. Just as the stream is a boundary which must be crossed, so the boundary is a threshold which must be trans-gressed if interpretation is to occur. In terms of trans-gression, interpretation "takes place on the boundary, at the border, the threshold, the limen, betwixt'n between the settled(ing) and the unsettled(ing), the familiar and the strange, the known and the unknown, the inside and the outside," as Mark C. Taylor notes ("Text as Victim" 64). Interpretation for the dreamer is thus an act of trans-gression, an act of crossing the boundary between the metaphoric and the literal; to do so, the Pearl-dreamer must also come to understand that metaphoricity is grounded in the sign, that the sign of the thing can never be that thing.[5]

The Pearl-maiden offers the Pearl-dreamer the opportunity to trans-gress the boundary--hence to interpret. She, in essence, attempts to translate for the Pearl-dreamer, to take the construction of language out of its purely literal sense in order to teach him metaphoricity; she reconstructs the literal constructs of the Pearl-dreamer's interrogations. It is between the Pearl-dreamer's construction and the Pearl-maiden's deconstruction that the process of metaphor-making lies.

Between the literalness of what the dreamer sees and the metaphoricity which the maiden suggests there is a gap; the gap must be bridged, the boundary crossed, if the dreamer is to learn metaphoricity and, consequently, interpretation. In his attempt to bridge the gap--that is, to cross the stream--the dreamer loses his dream-vision, but by doing so, he completes the crossing, since his act of trans-gressing is linked to his eventual act of interpretation.

The metaphoricity attained by the Pearl-dreamer is itself trans-gression, given that only in the crossing of boundaries are metaphors made. The boundaries between meanings must be crossed and mixed if new meaning is to be generated or revealed, a meaning not readily apparent in the rigid definitions of the original boundaries; meaning must be un-hidden if metaphoricity is to exist. In trans-gressing the boundaries of the stream, then, the Pearl-dreamer un-hides his own capacity for understanding metaphoricity.

But the trans-gressing of the stream by the Pearl-dreamer is inextricably linked with an inhering tautology, or narcissism, for trans-gression is, for the Pearl-dreamer, contingent upon bridging the gap between the literal and the metaphoric. This gap is itself manifest in the "mirror of Narcissus," or the Narcissus crux. The

Pearl-dreamer's preoccupation with sight and seeing underlies his eventual recognition of metaphoricity, for the dreamer must contend with the Narcissus crux, originally arising out of Narcissus's preoccupation with sight and, further, his inability to move from literalness of sight to metaphoricity of mirroring, or reflecting.[6] The dreamer's eventual understanding of interpretation entails an understanding first of his own contention with the gap that ultimately consumed Narcissus (that is, the dreamer's own tautological paradox of sameness and difference--an inhering narcissism) and, more important, he eventually comes to the realization that narcissism is, in hermeneutic terms, a necessity if any act of interpretation is to occur.

Though the ubiquity of medieval mirror-metaphor hardly needs to be outlined here,[7] what is crucial in the relationship between mirroring and interpretation in terms of the Pearl-dreamer's trans-gressing is self-mirroring. At stake in self-mirroring or self-reflecting is the ability to distinguish between sameness and difference and, more important, to understand the implications of this crucial gap. The paradox of this apparent tautology is that while the original and its reflection seem to be the same, they are different; the original begets its image, yet the image is not of the original. As Augustine notes,

> Where there is an image, there is similitude but not equality . . . as in a mirror, there is the image of a man because it is expressed from him; and it is also necessarily a similitude; nevertheless, there is no equality because many things are lacking in the image which nevertheless are in the thing from which it is expressed. And where there is equality, there is similitude but no image. (Cited by Shoaf, Currency of the Word 19)

The crux of a narcissistic episode is recognizing difference when confronted with apparent same-ness, i.e., understanding "Otherness." In this sense, interpretation is based on recognizing the necessity of distinction--in short, bridging, or trans-gressing, the gap.

Interpretation by means of determining Otherness, or difference, relates in part to the ubiquitous medieval practice of "definition by contraries," that is, by recognizing what something or someone is not, one can determine what it is; opposities define each other in terms of difference. Jean de Meun, in the Roman de la Rose, comments clearly on this relationship:

> Ainsinc va des contreres choses,
> les unes sunt des autres gloses;
> et qui l'une an veust definit,
> de l'autre li doit souvenir,
> ou ja, par nule antancion,
> n'i metra diffinicion;
> car qui des .II. n'a connoisance,
> ja n'i connoistra differeance,
> san quoi ne peut venir en place
> diffinicion que l'an face. (21543-52)
>
> [Thus things go by contraries; one is the gloss of the other. If one wants to define one of the pair, he must remember the other, or he will never, by any intention, assign a definition to it; for he who has no understanding of the two will never understand the difference between them, and without this

> difference no definition that one may make can come to anything.]

Just as a framework of sameness is necessary to establish contraries, or differences, so the recognition of distinction is necessary to establish definition--and hence interpretation.[8]

In this context, sameness is contingent upon difference, for the recognition of sameness corresponds to the recognition of difference; glossing occurs only when the components of the pair are defined in conjunction with each other. Jean de Meun recognizes that without difference there is no definition, no understanding. Juxtaposing the one with its contrary other not only allows for definition, but makes it possible; that is, without the crucial juxtaposition of contraries, no definition, or interpretation, can exist. R.A. Shoaf, in discussing the relationship between juxtaposition and duality in "Medieval Studies After Heidegger, After Derrida," notes that this crucial relationship informs a method of interpretation, "juxtology," which

> emerges from the ancient epistemology of knowledge by contraries and pursues, by comparisons . . . the aleatory juxtapositions of minds or sounds that produce the phenomena of meanings. So doing, juxtology recognizes the ontology of error and its necessity: we humans come to the truth only by wandering. (23)

Juxtaposition, then, allows for comparison which, in turn, allows for definition; interpretation is therefore

contingent upon the structure of the dual components which, for the Pearl-dreamer, are the "self" and the "Other."

The Pearl-dreamer's inability to define "Otherness" is apparent throughout the dream-vision, for the fin' amors discourse[9] which the Pearl-dreamer employs in his conversation with the Pearl-maiden has an inhering narcissism, in that the dreamer's professions seem more closely linked with himself than with her. His responses to the Pearl-maiden are clearly linked to his own thoughts rather than to hers; he speaks in response to what he wants her to be saying rather than what she actually says. For example, even after the Pearl-maiden has discussed at length with him the significance of her place in Paradise and the connotations of Jerusalem and the Lamb, the Pearl-dreamer returns to the language of fin' amors: "'Motelez may so meke and mylde,'/ þen sayde I to þat lufly flor,/'Bryng me to þat bygly bylde,/ and let me se þy blysful bor'" (961-4). He continues to use the vocabulary of a courtly-love game and ignores the seriousness of what the maiden is addressing.[10] Apparently, he is unable to separate himself from her, and hence he does not hear her because he is still self-absorbed, and he is unable to appreciate her words because he still pines for her.

Moreover, his pining is a manifestation of the anguish he feels in response to frustration, which is itself a failure to possess some Other. His desire seems not so

much to love as to possess. In this sense, the beloved is a manifestation of the lover; like Narcissus, the Pearl-dreamer sees in his beloved that which he himself desires, regardless of whether or not it really exists in the beloved. Hence his difficulty in understanding her words--she is literally a part of him (if, indeed, his daughter or, if not, then she is the beloved to him, the lover), and metaphorically a part of him, a projection of his own desire.[11] The narcissism of their discourse centers around this projection, for the Pearl-dreamer, like Narcissus, focuses his attention on what he sees as an ultimate object of possession, made all the more desirable by dint of his ascribing to it those qualities he desires for himself.

Ultimately, then, the exaggerating nature of fin' amors is, for the Pearl-dreamer, an ironic failure to make a distinction. He praises the maiden, assigning to her desirable and exaggerated attributes; these characteristics, worthy of praise from the dreamer, who presumably lacks them, should logically distinguish the maiden from the dreamer. Yet, ironically, it is precisely the superficial, exaggerated nature of the praise which renders it insignificant; in his attempt to praise the maiden, the dreamer takes away distinction. For example, he addresses her at one point as "O maskelez perle in perlez pure,/ þat bere ,.../þe perle of prys" (745-6), an address

almost ridiculous in its excess; the surfeit of "pearl" here reiterates the artificiality of the praise and, moreover, demonstrates the dreamer's lack of metaphoricity--he reiterates the only comparison he seems to know, that of the maiden and pearl, and even then it is a comparison lacking in depth or sophistication.[12] He praises the maiden in his own terms, his own basic comparison, for it is his own image of her which he seeks.

The failure to distinguish is reiterated, too, by the dreamer's allusion to Pygmalion when asking the Pearl-maiden about her rank:

> 'O maskelez perle in perlez pure
> Þat berez,' quoÞ I, 'Þe perle of prys,
> Quo formed Þe Þy fayre fygure?
> Þat wroȝt Þy wede he watz ful wys;
> Þy beaute com neuer of nature--
> Pymalyon paynted neuer Þy vys,
> Ne Arystotel nawÞer by hys lettrure
> Of carped Þe kynde Þese propertez;
> Þy colour passez Þe flour-de-lys,
> Þyn angel-hauyng so clene cortez.
> Breue me, bryȝt, quat ky offys
> Berez Þe perle so maskellez?' (745-56).

The Pearl-dreamer's description of the Pearl-maiden suggests the tautology inhering in perception based on sight alone. The maiden is, like Pygmalion's statue, the dreamer's own work, his own creation.[13] Just as Pygmalion's statue is so life-like and desirable that Pygmalion is driven by desire to possess it, so the Pearl-dreamer feels the need to possess that which he idolizes and desires; ironically, the dreamer dissociates the maiden

from Pygmalion, when it is the dreamer himself, as Pygmalion, who "paints her face" in the sense that he defines it as he describes it.

But this is not to say that the Pearl-dreamer is engaging in idolatry. This point can perhaps be made more clear in reference to D.W. Robertson's discussion of idolatry: "the deliberate cultivation of a phantasm in such a way as to imply a lesser love for God" (Preface 103). In analyzing Jean de Meun's narrative of Pygmalion in the Roman, Robertson argues that "Jean de Meun's poem is a warning to heed the voice of reason, and to avoid desire that may lead to hypocritical behavior and adultery in the heart" (104). But such an analysis does not recognize the possibility that the dreamer (be it Amans, the Pearl-dreamer, etc.), while engaging in the Pygmalionism of his delight in his self-generated image, is on a path which will lead to a greater, not a lesser, love for God. In other words, the creation of an image does not necessarily entail the type of image-idolatry which "was a problem even in a Christian society where no one worshipped 'graven images'" (99).

Pygmalionism, as it is a form of Narcissism, is a necessary step in the Pearl-dreamer's ultimate transgression and, as such, is hardly worthy of condemnation; in fact, while Robertson focuses on the negative commentary of Arnulf of Orleans, who condemns Pygmalion "as a typical

idolator," Dante's friend Giovanni del Vergilio praises him in the latter's Ovidian commentary (Fleming 91). The image created by the Pygmalion-like Pearl-dreamer is, admittedly, a manifestation of desire, but more important, it is a signification of sameness, a sign that the self and the desired Other are locked together within a single image which, ultimately, must give way to Otherness. The Pearl-dreamer, like Narcissus and the Narcissus-like Pygmalion, pines for an image which signifies, ultimately, the absence of a living, original Other--which the dreamer will understand only after the image, as well as the vision, is lost.

Indeed, only after the Pearl-dreamer has experienced his dream and come outside of it can he begin to recognize the significance of the experience, and it is his crucial attempt at crossing the stream which allows for this transition. Within the confines of the dream, the Pearl-dreamer is subordinated to the Pearl-maiden's authority, dependent upon her interpretation and translation; unable and unwilling to develop an hermeneutic perception, he is led along by the maiden until his rash attempt removes him from the dream. Yet it is precisely this removal which prompts the dreamer to interpret for himself, since he becomes self-sufficient only after he is removed from the dream, and hence from the Pearl-maiden. Only after he

loses the vision and the maiden does he begin to un-hide for himself, having depended on sight alone throughout his dream-encounter with the maiden.

Throughout the dream, the Pearl-maiden chastizes the Pearl-dreamer for his foolish dependence on sight alone. Seeing the Pearl-maiden for the first time within the frame of the dream, the Pearl-dreamer assumes that she is, in fact, the maiden whom he seeks and for whom he grieves; yet he has no evidence on which to base such a belief, other than that which his eye perceives--a perception easily seduced by desire. Confident in his sight, the dreamer asks, "Now were I at yow bygonde þise wawez, I were a joyfol jeuler" (287-8). His request reiterates his desire to cross the stream, yet because he requests the crossing he demonstrates that he has not reached any understanding, that he fails to comprehend the implications of his desire.

Thus the Pearl-maiden scolds the Pearl-dreamer for putting words before wit--for speaking when he does not understand:

> 'Jueler,' sayde þat gemme clene,
> 'Wy borde ȝe men? So madde ȝe be!
> Þre wordez hatz þou spoken at ene:
> Vnavysed, forsoþe, wern alle þre.
> Þou ne woste in worlde quat on dotz mene;
> Þy worde byfore Þy wytte con fle.
> Þou says Þou trawez me in þis dene
> Bycawse Þou may with yȝen me se;
> Ano er, Þou says in Þys countre
> Þyself schal won with me ryȝt here;
> Þe rydde, to passe Þys water fre:
> Þat may no joyfol jeuler. (289-300)

Her continuing admonishment provides the dreamer with the means of understanding, though he is not able to appreciate the instructions at the time they are given; he must wait until he is outside the vision. The maiden, instructing the dreamer, notes,

> I halde þat jueler lyttel to prayse
> Þat leuez wel þat he sez wyth yȝe . . .
> ȝe setten Hys wordez ful westernays
> Þat leuez noÞynk bot ȝe hit syȝe;
> And þat is a poynt o sorquydryȝe. (301-9)

She points out to him that if he believes nothing but what he is able to see, then it is a fault of pride; relying on his faculty of sight results from the dreamer's over-reliance on vision alone. Thus, again she reminds him not to rely on the frailties of sight but instead to judge by reason: "Deme now þyself . . . þou wylnez ouer Þys to weue" (313-18).

The Pearl-maiden leads the Pearl-dreamer to discover that sight is the weakest of the senses, that the eye is easily seduced and easily pleased by outward appearances, that sight without insight leads to faulty, or superficial, understanding. Hence the maiden's emphasis on reading and writing: she attempts to convey to the dreamer the importance of interpreting words rather than sights alone. Thus in her exposition on St. John's Apocalypse (the "gostly drem") she notes that while John writes of seeing the vision (As John þe apostel hit syȝ wyth syȝt,/ I syȝe at cyty of gret renoun [986-7]), it is up to the faithful

to read his account and to interpret both it and the teachings of Christ: "Ryȝtwysly quo con rede/ He loke on bok and be awayed" (709-10); "Lest les þou leue my tale farande,/ In Appocalyppece is wryten in wro . . ." (865-6).

Her focusing on language reiterates the importance of the Word as well as the word within the context of her exegesis, for just as God's Logos is manifest in Christ the Incarnate, so the written word is the incarnation of language.[14] John establishes the metaphor of the former, and the text of the Bible reiterates the metaphoricity of the latter "as John hym wrytez" (1033): "In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum"; "Et Verbum caro factum est et havitavit in nobis"; "et vocatur nomen eius Verbum Dei" ["In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1.14); "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Apoc 19.12-13); "And his name is called Word of God" (John 5.7)]. The Book of God is the incarnation of God's word (and, as such, the incarnation of the word of the Word), just as Christ is the incarnation of God's Word.[15] The maiden, in essence, reminds the Pearl-dreamer that the Word of God is made accessible by the Book, and thus encourages him to read, to derive meaning for himself by experiencing the written word.

Yet the Pearl-dreamer is almost wholly dependent upon sight. Indeed, he describes the maiden as a rose even

after the weaknesses of vision are expounded to him by the maiden:

> I am bot mokke and mul among,
> And þou so ryche a reken rose
> And bydez here by þys blysful bonc,
> Þer lyuez lyste may neuer lose.
> (905-8)

His comparison here is made all the more inappropriate on account of her earlier comparison of the rose with death: "For þat þou lestez watz bot a rose/ Þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef" (269-70).[16] Thus his failed attempt at metaphor suggests that his superficial reliance on vision is inadequate if he is to participate meaningfully in the theological discussion at hand. After attempting to cross the stream, the dreamer will come to understand the nature of seeing and the potential faultiness of the eye's perception. This is not to say, of course, that all seeing is faulty or misguiding--just that the potential for error must be acknowledged and that interpretation requires more than superficial visual perception; it requires seeing in the sense of revelation, or un-hiding.

The Pearl-maiden herself speaks of the importance of un-hiding in her apocalyptic exegesis:

> 'If I þis mote þe schal vnhyde,
> Bow vp towarde þys bornez heued,
> And I anendez þe on þis syde
> Schal sve, tyl þou to a hil be veued.'
> (973-6)
>
> As John þe apostel hit syȝ with syȝt,
> I syȝe þat cyty of gret renoun,
> Jerusalem so nwe and ryally dyȝt,

As hit watz ly3t fro þe heuen addoun.
(985-8)

Her crucial use of "vnhyde" here suggests the importance of exposing that which is already there but covered; she wishes to "un-hide" the truth which is hidden, to reveal what needs to be seen and understood (i.e., revealed and re-veiled). Her emphasis on apocalypse as revealing/re-veiling reiterates the potential for deception in seeing and sight, for it reiterates the plurality of meaning inhering in any single episode of sight.

Moreover, it serves to remind the Pearl-dreamer that, for the faithful, belief/faith is not of sight; in the words of St. Paul, "Est autem fides sperandorum substantia, rerum argumentum non apparentium" ("Now faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" [Heb 11.1]). Revealing and re-veiling entail a level of sight, and insight, beyond the superficial--to "unhyde" is to remove the existing veil while replacing it with another, i.e., a framework for one's own interpretation. The maiden's emphasis on "unhyde" thus reiterates the un-hiding necessary for the faithful: "per fidem enim ambulamus et non per speciem"; "Nihil autem opertum est, quod non reveletur, neque absconditum, quod non sciatur"; "Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur, sempiterna eius et virtus et divinitas, ut sint inexcusabiles" ["For

we walk by faith, and not by sight" (2 Cor 5.7); "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed: nor hidden, that shall not be known" (Luke 12.2); "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable" (Romans 1:20)] Unhiding is thus crucial to faith, because, in Augustinian terms, ". . . the things of this world are seen as an insight, as informed by the glory of God which descends into the world, and of which glory the created order is, literally speaking, a lively 'imagination'" (Jeffrey 6).

The Pearl-dreamer, of course, does not recognize the significance of the lecture, and, even at what is (unknown to the dreamer at the time) to be the end of the dream-vision, the dreamer is driven by "luf-daungere" upon seeing the Lamb's retinue--and still thinks it possible to cross the stream to be with the Pearl-maiden:

> Delyt me drof in yȝe and ere,
> My manez mynde to maddyng malte;
> Quen I seȝ my frely, I wolde be þere,
> Byȝonde þe water þaȝ ho were walte.
> I þoȝt þat noþyng myȝt me dere
> To fech me bur and take me halte,
> And to start in þe strem schulde non me stere,
> To swymme þe remnaunt, þaȝ I þer swalte.
> Bot of þat munt I watz bitalt;
> When I schulde start in þe strem astraye,
> Out of þat caste I watz bycalt:
> Hit watz not at my Pryncez paye.
> (1153-64)

His desire to cross is, at this point in the poem, as

unreasonable and foolish as is his earlier considerations of such action, for his motivation arises not out of understanding and reason, but of the desire and impulse prompted by sight--" þen saȝ I þer my lyttel quene . . .þat syȝt me gart to þenk to wade/ For luf-longyng in gret delyt" (1147-52)--and hence he is thwarted in his effort.[17] Here, the superficial "syȝt" prompts the attempt at crossing the stream; no insight is derived from or applied to what the Pearl-dreamer sees.

But the Pearl-maiden cleverly brings the Pearl-dreamer to self-understanding. Although he does not learn from her while he is within the dream, he does so after awakening precisely because he has awakened; only after the dreamer is outside of the vision can he then recollect the vision and interpret it. In other words, as a character within his own dream-vision, the Pearl-dreamer must remove himself from the vision before he can even begin to interpret meaning from the experience, i.e., meaning that will affect him in the "real" world of the narrative frame in which the vision occurs.[18]

The interpretation of dreams obviously received a great deal of attention throughout the Middle Ages (e.g., Macrobius, Augustine, John of Salisbury), though most commentators concede that while dreams might be easily classified, they are less easily interpreted; John of

Salisbury, for example, argues that "dreams are ambiguous, and anyone who confidently states meaning . . . is a fool," unless divinely guided (Hieatt 29). All seem to agree, however, that the dream must be concluded before it can be analyzed--hence the necessity of the Pearl-dreamer's awakening within the text if his interpretation is to be within the text.

For the Pearl-dreamer, the awakening provides the opportunity for self-interpretation. The Pearl-maiden thus lets him continue his narcissistic veiling in order that it be un-hidden (or, re-veiled) after he has lost everything that he thought he wanted. Hence her allusion to the parable of the merchant and the pearl: "withouten mote oþer mascle of sul ande synne . . . þat the jueler soȝte þurȝ perre pres,/ And solde alle hys goud, boþe wolen and lynne,/ To bye hym a perle watz mascellez" (725; 730-793).[19] Her association suggests to the dreamer that sacrifice is necessary if he is to understand her meaning--for the Pearl-dreamer, it is the loss of the vision--but the sacrifice will be worthwhile, the allusion suggests.

The Pearl-dreamer's narcissism is, ultimately, crucial to his eventual understanding. Narcissism brings the dreamer to a point where trans-gression can be realized; the Pearl-maiden successfully uses the dreamer's inhering narcissism as a means of bringing him to a point where he can find his own means of interpretation. In forcing the

dreamer to become his own interpreter, the Pearl-maiden demonstrates to him that self-understanding must precede and coincide with any understanding of God, for one cannot understand God if one has not yet learned self-understanding.

In this sense, the Pearl-dreamer's eventual understanding can be read as a conversion account, echoing Augustine as Augustine echoes Narcissus. In his recent analysis of Augustine's conversion account as it re-figures Ovid's Narcissus, Robert McMahon notes,

> The young Augustine's reading Paul's text and accepting its exhortation to "put on Jesus Christ" marks a vision of himself "after the spirit" in the mirror of Scripture. Like Narcissus's vision, it determines the rest of his life. But where Narcissus sees his own reflection, the young Augustine envisions the divine Original in whose "image and likeness" he is made and re-made. . . . Augustine thereby"converts" the "Narcissus" to Christianity by linking it to the Adam-Christ figura implied in his own, and in all, conversion. ("Text-Work" 354)

Although Augustine's "Narcissus" is more a counter-Narcissus, or "re-figured" Narcissus, Augustine's conversion demonstrates the importance of narcissistic self-understanding in terms of conversion; in other words, conversion, as a spiritual metamorphosis, is prompted by self-understanding. Self-understanding necessarily derives from self-revelation; that is, un-hiding the real self after recognizing, through comparison, difference.

Augustine recognizes "Otherness" when using Scripture as a speculum; in using this speculum, Augustine argues, one can recognize his own deformity and then appeal to God for re-formation: "First let your deformity be displeasing to yourself, and then you will merit beauty from Him. . . . He has placed his own Scripture as a mirror for you . . . a mirror has been set forth for you in this text; see if you are as it has said; if you are not yet such, groan in prayer that you may become so" ("Text-Work" 354). Conversion is, for Augustine, a sudden metamorphosis which derives from a recognition of difference and a desire to become different; conversion "transforms the person, makes one suddenly 'other' than one was" ("Text-Work" 353).

The Pearl-dreamer, too, attains a conversion, in that he undergoes a spiritual metamorphosis, leaving faith-by-rote for faith-by-understanding. That is, he comes to realize that faith is more than mere acceptance; to know and love God is to understand faith and to recognize one's own place within it. "Our knowledge of God in this life, reaffirms Augustine, is partial and shadowy. It is the knowledge of faith, per speculum in aenigmate [through a glass in a dark manner]. . . . We can know God as he is only if we become like him . . . and we can become like him only by knowing him" (Colish, Mirror 53). The Pearl-dreamer's ultimate trans-gression allows him to know God by becoming

like him, and vice versa; as God's "frende," the Pearl-dreamer is able to participate in this paradoxical relationship.

The crucial relationship between narcissism and transgression suggested by the Pearl-dreamer's ultimate crossing, or trans-gression, is reiterated by the Pearl-poet's citational impulse. Although the Pearl-poet draws from a tradition of Narcissus-in-the-garden texts, his citational strategy--a poetics of translation-- is significant not in terms of Quellenforschung, but rather as a means of exploring the importance of Narcissus in hermeneutic terms. In other words, the historical tableau in which the Pearl-poet exists provides a thematic justification for building a poetics of reference in terms of transgression and narcissism--but the thematic significance of Narcissus in the various texts should not be limited by historical possibility (e.g., manuscript transmission). Placing the Pearl-poet within his medieval milieu does, however, provide a means for better understanding the poet's work in relation to that of his predecessors and contemporaries.

Most crucial in terms of Narcissus-evocation is the Pearl-dreamer's description of the stones in the stream, hosting a number of important allusions, evocations, and citations:

The dubbemente of þo derworth depe
Wern bonkez bene of beryl bryȝt.
Swangeande swete þe water con swepe,
Wyth a rownande rourde raykande aryȝt;
In þe founce þer stoden stonez stepe,
As glente þurȝ glas þat glowed and glyȝt--
As stremande sternez, quen stroþe-men slepe,
Staren in welkyn in wynter nyȝt;
For vche a pobbel in pole þer pyȝt
Watz emerad, saffer, oþer gemme gente,
þat alle þe loȝe lemed of lyȝt,
So dere watz hit adubbement. (109-20)

Not only does the description connect the Pearl-dreamer to the archetypal Narcissus, but also to the corpus of medieval mythography of Ovid's Narcissus episode--which glosses the episode in terms of Christian Platonism.

The Pearl-dreamer's description may first be likened to the Narcissus episode of Ovid's Metamorphoses:

fons erat illimis, nitidis argenteus undis . . .
hic puer, et studio venandi lassus et aestu,
procubuit faciemque loci fontemque secutus.
dumque sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit,
dumque bibit, visae correptus imagine formae
spem sine corpore amat; corpus putat esse, quod unda
est. astupet ipse sibi vultuque immotus eodem
haeret, ut e Pario formatum marmore signum.
spectat humi positus geminum, sua lumina. . . .
(III: 407; 413-20)

[[There] [w]as a pool, well-deep and silver-clear . . .
Here spent Narcissus, weary of the hunt
And sick with heat, fell to the grass, charmed by
The bright well and its greenery. He bent
To drink, to dissipate his thirst, yet as he
Drank another thirst rose up: enraptured
Beauty caught his eyes that trapped him;
He loved the image that he thought was shadow,
And looked amazed at what he saw--his face.
Fixed, bending over it, he could not speak,
Himself as though cut from Parian marble.
Flat on the grass he lay to look deep, deeper
Into two stars that were his eyes . . .]

The stones of the Pearl-dreamer's stream evoke the reflection of Narcissus's eyes as he gazes into the water at his own reflection; they are an evocation not only of the idea of mirroring, but also of the inter-relationship of mirroring and reflecting to seeing and perceiving. How the dreamer perceives, or sees, the stream is affected by his inability to recognize the significance of the image at hand. Like Narcissus, the dreamer sees the beauty of the image, but fails to comprehend the more significant implications of the apparently benign setting.

Plotinus incorporates the Narcissus myth into his Enneads, calling attention to the failure of Narcissus:

> For if anyone follow what is like a beautiful shape playing over water--is there not a myth telling of such a dupe, how he sank into the depths of the current and was swept away into nothingness? (Cited by McMahon, "Text-Work" 349)

As Robert McMahon notes, "[t]hough Ovid's version differs from Plotinus's, both describe fascination with an evanescent body, implying a failure of self-knowledge and leading to death. Ovid's tale invites a neo-Platonist moral: 'Noli foras ire, in interiore hominis veritas'" (McMahon, "Text-Work" 350). Arnulf of Orleans, in his accessus to the Metamorphoses, argues that "Ovid's transformations would teach men about their erratic nature and urge modification and regulation of psychological instability" (Knoespel 32). Likewise, John of Garland's Integumenta Ovidii "represents an important rediscovery of

transformation as a vital, ongoing force in creation" (Knoespel 38). The anonymous French Ovide Moralisé incorporates moral glosses into the poetry, and "Narcissus becomes an exemplum of wasted fame" (Knoespel 50). Although the emphasis of the commentaries is largely on moral exempla, the commentaries provide material for other texts which, while drawing on both the commentaries and the Ovidian myth, are not limited to mythography but which are concerned with implications of the Narcissus story--the Roman de la Rose, for example.

Closely related to the Pearl-dreamer's description is the fountain in Guillaume de Lorris's Roman de la Rose, for the latter not only uses the arbor vitae connotations, but moreover, it is described as the actual fountain where Narcissus fell in love with himself and died. In addition, the fountain contains stones which, like those of the Pearl-dreamer's stream, suggest seeing and mirroring in their apparent similarity to eyes:

> El fonz de la Fontaine aval
> avoit .II. pierres de cristal
> qu'a grant entente remirai.
> . . . Et por la chose feire entendre,
> un essample vos voil aprendre:
> ausi con li mireors montre
> le choses qui sont à l'encontre
> et i voit l'en sanz coverture
> et lor color et lor figure,
> tot autresi vos di por voir
> que li cristaus sanz decevoir
> tot l'estre dou vergier encuse
> à cellui qui en l'eve muse;
> . . . C'est li miroers périlleus,

où Narcisus, li orgueilleus,
mira sa face et ses ieuz vers,
dont il jut puis morz toz envers.
(1535-7; 1551-60; 1569-172)

[At the bottom of the fountain were two crystal stones upon which I gazed with great attention . . . To help you understand, I will give you an example. Just as the mirror shows things that are in front of it, without cover, in their true colors and shapes, just so, I tell you truly, do the crystals reveal the whole condition of the garden, without deception, to those who gaze into the water. . . . It is the perilous mirror in which proud Narcissus gazed at his face and his gray eyes; on account of this mirror he afterward lay dead, flat on his back. (51-2)]

Here, the dreamer establishes a connection between the potential for narcissism inhering in the reflection with the language of fin' amors; seeing in terms of reflection, or mirroring, is connected to the capacity of the dreamer to perceive accurately while pining--a situation with which the Pearl-dreamer must contend.

The Pearl-dreamer, like the dreamer of the Roman, uses the language of fin' amors, which in its projection of desire is the language of Narcissus. Amans sees the stones in the fountain not only as crystals which reflect that which he desires but, more important, they are his own eyes; he sees himself in the image, which he takes to be the image of the garden and the rosebud, apparently failing to recognize the relationship of the crystals to the eyes of Narcissus.[20] In becoming enamored by the stones/eyes which he perceives as belonging to some Other but which are, in fact, his own, he in essence falls in love with

himself. The Pearl-dreamer, like Narcissus and Amans, is mesmerized by the stones because he sees his own eyes, and hence his own self, in them.

The setting of the Pearl-dreamer's vision is an echoing of Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus:

> Hic videt irrigui fontis radiare nitorem,
> Qui praedives aquis reliquo conspectior amne,
> Sidera luce domat, praecellit mella sapore;
> Cujus deliciis cedit Paradisus, odore
>
> Balsama vincuntur, nardus submittitur illi.
> . . . Qui mulcens urit, urendo mulcet, et ardens
> Mitigat, incendens demulcet, temperat urens.
>
> [Here she saw splendour flowing out from a moistening fountain, which, far more beautiful than any other stream, richer in its water by far, tames the stars with its light, surpasses honey with its savour; to these delights Paradise yields the prize, they conquer balsam with their scent, nard makes submission to them. . . . Which soothes as it burns, in burning soothes, and burning also alleviates; blazing, caresses; burning, assuages.] (Cited by Kean 108-9)

Here, as Patricia Kean notes, the text is similar to the later Paradiso in that "the three main elements in Dante's description, the blazing fire, the scent, and the flowers are all present," but more important in terms of the eventual evocation in the Pearl-dreamer's description, "the jewels might be inferred from the references to the richness of the stream" (109). Again, the beauty of the stream conveys some potential for narcissistic perception, suggested by the reflecting, or mirroring, qualities of the gems.

The gems are reiterated throughout Pearl, as the Pearl-maiden discusses St. John's vision:

As John þise stonez in writ con nemme,
I knew þe name after his tale
Jasper hyȝt þe fyrst gemme
þat I on þe fyrst basse con wale--
. . . Saffer helde þe secounde stale;
. . . þe emerade þe furþe so grene of scale
. . . þet joyned John þe crysolyt,
þe seuenþe gemme in fundament;
þe aȝtþe þe beryl cler and quyt;
þe topasye twynne-how þe nente endent;
. . . þe wal abof þe bantels bent
O jasporye as glas þat glysnande schon.
(997-1020)

The description obviously refers to the twelve foundations of the wall in Apocalypse--"Fundamenta muri civitatis omni lapide pretioso ornata: fundamentum primum iaspis, secundus sapphirus . . ." ["[T]he foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones: [t]he first foundation was jasper: the second, sapphire . . ."(Apoc 21.19)]--and functions as part of the maiden's apocalyptic register. But additionally, the stones link the apocalyptic register, the register of un-hiding, to that of Narcissus, the register of the self. In other words, the evocation of the stones works in a twofold manner: the gems as they pertain to the Un/un-hiding, and the eyes in the mirror of Narcissus as they link the Pearl-dreamer to the Narcissus crux.

In addition, the richness of the gems and the arbitrariness of their worth are reiterated by the Pearl-maiden to the Pearl-dreamer. The dreamer recognizes that they have value, but he understands their worth only in economic terms, e.g., the pearl of great price. In other words, the Pearl-dreamer, while able both to recognize and

to utilize the signification of reference in the pearl/price metaphor, is apparently unable to carry the metaphor a step further. The emphasis on the richness of the gems not only draws attention to the similarity of the Pearl-dreamer's own concept of value to the value system inhering in the other-world of the dream-vision, but moreover, the richness reiterates the arbitrariness of signs and signification: the gems are valuable--of great price--because everyone agrees that they are, not because they have any intrinsic greatness of worth. In this sense, they must be understood in terms of metaphoricity, for only then can they be rightfully ascribed value; ultimately, their value is in the metaphoricity that they, as valid signs, convey.[21]

The connotations of the stream itself can be compared, in part, to the fontis of Anticlaudianus which, in turn, can be traced, too, to Canticum Canticorum--itself an evocation of Eden. Here, the bridegroom notes,

> Hortus conclusus, soror mea sponsa,
> hortus conclusus, fons signatus;
> propagines tuae paradisus malorum punicorum
> cum optimis fructibus, cypri cum nardo (4.12-3).
>
> [My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed,
> a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up. Thy
> plants are a paradise of pomegranates with fruits
> of the orchard. Cypress with spikenard.]

The description of the bride as "fountain" and "garden" is an apparent allusion to the Genesis "garden-of-love" imagery. Although there is no narcissism in the Canticum,

there is mirroring, reflection; in this sense, the "garden-of-love" imagery suggested by the arbor vitae[22] of the Genesis myth apparent here is appropriated by later poets and used in conjunction with Ovidian mythography to create a "garden-of-self-love."

In the Canticum, the Eden garden/fountain description is used as part of an erotic discourse between lovers--the bride and the bridegroom--in a manner later echoed by the Pearl-poet when the Pearl-dreamer addresses the Pearl-maiden in the language of fin' amors. Moreover, the "seeking the beloved" motif, apparent, too, in the Narcissus story and in Pearl, connects the garden/fountain imagery with the discourse of lover and beloved. In this respect, "[the motif] . . . is important in Canticles because the search is paradigmatic of the process of love, in which a lover must be willing to take the initiative and actively seek the loved one" (Fox 290-1). The bride and bridegroom of the Canticum are, much like Beatrice and Dante and the Pearl-maiden and the Pearl-dreamer,[23] engaged in a hermeneutic discourse of comparison, for which metaphoricity is the crux.

In this respect, the resemblance of the Pearl-dreamer's description to Dante's description in Paradiso XXX and a briefer mention in Purgatorio XXX calls attention to the Narcissus in the pilgrim/dreamer.[24] The relationship between Dante, Pearl, and the "mirror of Narcissus" is manifest in the poems' descriptions:

Li occhi mi cadder giù nel chiaro fonte;
ma veggendomi in esso, i trassi a l'erbba
tanta vergogna mi gravò la fronte
(Purgatorio XXX: 76-8).

e vidi lume in forma di rivera
fulvido di fulgore, intra due rive
dipinte di mirabil primavera.
Di tal fiumana uscian faville vive,
e d'ogne parte si mettien ne' fiori,
quasi rubin che oro circunscrive;
poi, come inebrïate da li odori,
riprofondavan sé nel miro gurge,
e s'una intrava, un' altra n'uscia fori
(Paradiso XXX: 61-9).

[My lowered eyes caught sight of the clear stream,
but when I saw myself reflected there,
such shame weighed on my brow, my eyes drew back. . . .
[A]nd I saw light that took a river's form--
light flashing, reddish-gold, between two banks
painted with wonderful spring flowerings.
Out of that stream there issued living sparks,
which settled on the flowers on all sides,
like rubies set in gold; and then, as if
intoxicated with the odors, they
again plunged into the amazing flood:
as one spark sank, another emerged.]

The reflection of the gems in the stream is linked even more closely to Narcissus when the evocation is extended to include Beatrice's own description of what Dante has seen: "il fiume e li topazi/ ch'entrano ed escono e 'l rider de l'erbe/ son di lor vero umbriferi prefazi" ["The river and the gems/ of topaz entering and leaving, and/ the grasses' laughter--these are shadowy prefaces of their truth . . ."] (76-79)--linking sight (Narcissus) to un-hiding (Apocalypse). All that Dante sees, or believes he sees, is beyond his ability to perceive, for his sight is not yet sublime enough to understand imagery. Beatrice identifies the

problem to Dante, noting "ma è difetto da la parte tua, che non hai viste ancor tanto superbe" ["the defect lies/ in you, whose sight is not yet that sublime"] (80-1). Dante, like Narcissus, relies on his own visual perception, however inaccurate.

The significance of the Pearl-dreamer's evocation of Dante in the description of the stream becomes more apparent when analyzed in conjunction with the conclusion of Paradiso XXXIII, for Dante is granted the self-coincidence which Narcissus is denied, just as the Pearl-dreamer, through transgression, is granted a similar state by dint of amicitia. Dante, describing the encounter, notes,

> Oh quanto è corto il dire e come fioco
> al mio concetto! e questo, a quel ch'i' vidi,
> è tanto, che non basta a dicer "poco."
> O luce etterna che sola in te sidi,
> sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta
> e intendente te ami e arridi!
> Quella circulazion che sì concetta
> pareva in te come lume reflesso,
> da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,
> dentro da sé, del suo colore stesso,
> mi parve pinta de la nostra effige:
> per che 'l mio viso in lei tutto era messo
> (Paradiso XXXIII: 121-32).
>
> [How incomplete is speech, how weak, when set
> against my thought! And this, to what I saw,
> is such--to call it little is too much.
> Eternal light, You only dwell within
> Yourself, and only You know You; Self-knowing,
> Self-known, You love and smile upon Yourself!
> That circle--which begotten so, appeared
> in You as light reflected--when my eyes
> had watched it with attention for some time,
> within itself and colored like itself,

to me seemed painted with our effigy,
so that my sight was set on it completely.]

Dante, with his sight set completely on the circle, is granted the self-coincidence which eludes Narcissus; that is, Dante is able to see himself in the circle but recognizes, in this moment of simultaneity, the paradox of incarnation.

At this crucial instance, Dante is not God, yet God is Dante; simultaneously, the former equation both coincides with and contradicts the latter. As R.A. Shoaf notes, "When Dante-Narcissus looks into the Trinity, he does not see himself as God but he does see God as himself. . . . This is the mystery of the Judaeo-Christian God: He is a personal God" (Shoaf, Currency of the Word 99).[25] Within the image, God and man are equivalent, yet distinguished, for the radicalized difference between the divine and the human creates a definition by contraries. That is, the coincidence of the human and the divine sets up an implicit opposition, each term defining its opposite as per Jean de Meun's paradigm. In Dante's encounter, the degree of contrast, or difference, denotes the extent of the disparity between the two while, simultaneously, insisting upon their coincidence--hence the paradox.

Dante's inability to recall the specifics of the encounter suggests that the experience is too powerful for language; the vision cannot be codified--hence the need for

metaphoricity. Dante's journey up to its culmination is narrated, and indeed much of the Commedia treats the importance of history, records, and language, but the experiences themselves cannot presuppose the significance of any subsequent communication. The final encounter, however, is beyond that dimension of linear history; the final point on the line of Dante's journey is infinite, eternal. The crux, then, is the means by which Dante can communicate that which is outside the realm of communication. Dante does so by not doing so, using metaphoricity to convey what is outside the literal. After experiencing coincidence with God (that is, transgressing the boundaries of the literal), Dante-Narcissus turns to metaphoricity in seeking a means of signifying the experience.

The final stanza of Pearl demonstrates the Pearl-dreamer's own experience with God and his subsequent turning to metaphoricity:

> To pay þe Prince oþer sete saȝte
> Hit is ful e e to þe god Krystyin;
> For I haf founden Hym, boþe day and naȝte,
> A God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyin,
> Ouer þis hyul þis lote I laȝte,
> For pyty of my perle enclyin,
> And sy en to God I hit bytaȝte,
> In Krystez dere blessyng and myn,
> Þat in þe forme of bred and wyn
> þe preste vus schewez vch a daye.
> He gef vus to be His homly hyne
> Ande precious perlez vnto His pay.
> (1201-12)

He recognizes the metaphoricity of the Eucharist and

understands that in order to know God, one must understand the metaphor, to go beyond the superficial limits of visual perception and to formulate an understanding. He must not only find self-understanding, but moreover, he must learn to apply what he has learned; he must learn to interpret for himself.

The Pearl-dreamer's evocation of the Eucharist reiterates its metaphoricity and, more important, demonstrates that the Pearl-dreamer himself understands this metaphoricity. The Pearl-dreamer understands that the consumption of the bread and wine allows the believer to consume the body and blood of Christ the savior, to participate in the paradoxical metaphor; the one is the symbol of the Other, and the two mix in the embodying and incarnating of the one and its ultimate Other. The Eucharist represents metaphoricity in that the two are together and separate, joined and disjoined, alone yet totally connected. In order to participate, one must trans-gress the boundaries of the literal in order to accept the metaphoric, for the Eucharist may be understood in both literal and metaphoric terms.[26] In his evocation, the dreamer acknowledges that by trans-gressing the literal he can understand Christ.

In this sense, the consumption of the bread and wine suggests further metaphoricity: in consuming Christ

incarnate by participation in the Eucharist, one consumes Christ the Word, or Christ as Logos. Earlier in the poem, the Pearl-maiden reminds the dreamer that "Bot þe nwe, þat lyȝt of Godez sonde, þe Apostel in Apocallypse in theme con take" (944). Here, "take" may be understood as the literal "take," "obtain," "possess," or, in a completely different sense, it may be understood as "eat," "consume."[27] At the instance of its use, the Pearl-dreamer apparently understands the Pearl-maiden's comment as "the new [Jerusalem] . . . the Apostle in Apocalypse in theme did take," meaning that the Apostle John describes the importance of the new Jerusalem in his narrative. But the line may also be read as ". . . the Apostle in Apocalypse in theme did eat," an evocation of the Apostle John's consumption of the book: "Et dicit [the angel] mihi: Accipe et devora illum" ("And he said to me: Take the book, and eat it up"). This, of course, parallels Ezechiel 3:1, where the prophet, receiving his commission, is instructed, "comede volumen istud et vadens loquere ad filios Israel" ("eat this book, and go speak to the children of Israel"), and is similar, too, to Augustine's divinely inspired command to "take and read" the book.[28] After coming out of the dream, after trans-gressing the literal and learning to interpret for himself, the Pearl-dreamer may be echoing this lesson when he comments on the Eucharist in the final stanza, demonstrating his new understanding of Christian

metaphoricity; perhaps he recognizes that in the metaphoricity of the bread and wine/body and blood transgression there exists another transgression, that of consuming the word in order that it be spoken, just as the prophet and apostle consume the book and write about it--as the dreamer does in narrating his own experiences, and likewise the poet when he, too, narrates the episode.

For the Pearl-dreamer to recognize the metaphoricity of the Eucharist, he must necessarily recognize the unhiding that the Eucharist evokes, given its function as sign. In other words, ". . . by its character as sign, [the Eucharist] forms a valuable expression for the relation between the 'already' and the 'not yet' of eschatology" (Wainwright 153). Augustine's intense concern with signs informs the dreamer's own understanding: "if he is already a believer, he can recognize the sign as a sign of God and can judge how Godlike it is; the sign in turn can deepen his awareness of God. If he is not a believer, the sign can merely indicate the direction in which he should turn in order to orient himself toward God" (Colish, Mirror 223). The Pearl-dreamer, though already a believer, requires the trans-gressing induced by the Pearl-maiden in order to recognize the Eucharist as a sign of God's incarnation; moreover, throughout his conversion, he

becomes more oriented toward God but comes to understanding only after he finally trans-gresses.

Thus it is significant that the Pearl-dreamer describes God as a "frende ful fyin." That God is perceived by the dreamer as a friend seems unusual, for the label seems out of line with the other, more readily identifiable terms of "God" and "Lorde." But the designation is significant in that it demonstrates the dreamer's coming to understand God's friendship as a result of his own transgression. For the dreamer, God's friendship entails a complex relationship of separateness and togetherness. The Narcissus-dreamer knows that in friendship, he retains his own identity and can even find his own image in the Other; as Cicero notes, "Enim qui intuetur verum amicum intuetur quasi aliquod exemplar sui" ("For he who looks at a true friend looks, as it were, at a kind of likeness of himself") [67-8]. But the same holds true for the friend, the Other; each finds that while the sign (friend) is an image of his own likeness, each component of the pair is separated by difference, and thus held up to its Other in comparison. Together, they may share a benign, complementary state of friendship, though separately the two can never be equal.

In recognizing the friendship of God, the dreamer recognizes the Other-ness which eludes him throughout the vision. From the beginning of the dream, the dreamer is

plagued by the anguish which accompanies his inability to define Otherness in conjunction with transgression. At the stream, the dreamer does not fully realize the implications of his trans-gressing, nor the necessity of losing the vision. The object of his desire is so locked within himself that he cannot find the Otherness which he needs if he is to understand God. But after losing the dream, i.e., after trans-gressing, the dreamer is able to recognize the Other. Amicitia distinguishes the two, for the friendship between two beings recognizes the necessity of an Other.

The Pearl-dreamer's friendship with God, and hence his understanding of God, is recognized because of the narcissism inhering in his transgression. In other words, the Narcissus-dreamer recognizes the Otherness of God only because he has sought an Other in terms of his self. Throughout the dream, he cannot possess the image he seeks because it is not an Other, but himself. Only when he has come to self-understanding can he then move on to any understanding of God, and it is this understanding which redefines and reiterates his faith. The Pearl-dreamer, in the tradition of Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and Dante, learns that "[f]aith . . . is . . . not a static mental relationship between God and man, but a dynamic condition in which the believer moves toward the vision of God, a beatitude which perfects the whole man and which transforms

all of his human relationships" (Colish, Mirror 222). For the Pearl-dreamer, narcissism underlies this self-understanding, and hence his capacity for interpretation, since one must become an interpreter of himself before he can be an interpreter for himself.

The Pearl-dreamer learns that his "lote"[29] is his privilege to designate God as "frende," a privilege which arises out of the dreamer's new-found identification--which in turn arises out of his ability to read metaphoricity, i.e., to trans-gress the literal. Although it is the dreamer himself who makes the designation, the label "frende" becomes a new name not only for God but for the dreamer himself. The dreamer is, in essence, blessed with a new name after completing his trans-gression, or crossing, just as Jacob is blessed with his new name after trans-gressing the ford of Jaboc; the dreamer becomes like Abraham: "et amicus Dei appellatus est" ["and he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23).] The name signifies the dreamer's faith and understanding.

Within the text of the poem, the Pearl-dreamer acts, much as Dante does, as a Narcissus-pilgrim; that is, the Narcissus-pilgrim must first look into himself and come to self-understanding before moving on to understand theological signs. The Pearl-dreamer finds that the Narcissus-pilgrim's vision (or journey) culminates in a trans-gressing of the boundaries of metaphor--the only

means of accessing, or experiencing, God's Word/word. Rigid boundaries of meaning are broken, or crossed, to create new meaning--meaning which always exists as potential but which requires un-hiding if it is to be understood. This is the lesson which the Pearl-dreamer derives from the Pearl-maiden.

This is also the lesson which the reader derives from the Pearl-poet; the reader is to the poet what the dreamer is to the maiden, in that each pair comprises student and teacher. Just as the Pearl-dreamer must trans-gress the stream to arrive at the lesson of the Pearl-maiden, so must the reader trans-gress the text to arrive at a point of interpretation. To trans-gress the rigid boundaries of language is to take language out of its literal, reductionist sense and to place it in a context of metaphoricity. Hence the poet's emphasis on the mutability of the sign and the frailties of sight--just as each metaphor depends on the sign behind it, so the sign itself depends on its referent; word and thing are at once image and Other, subject to the arbitrariness of language and the efficacy of hermeneutic contexts. The Pearl-poet's treatment of Narcissus, then, ultimately exemplifies a poetics of reference articulated in terms of transgression.

Notes

[1]Transgression as it defines interpretation is discussed by Mark C. Taylor, "Transgression: Soren Kierkegaard" 305-53. Taylor notes,

> [T]he margin of transgression is the threshold where the encounter with the wholly Other, the absolutely Different, radical altarity almost takes place. . . . The transgression of transcendence creates a sense of horror--a horror that is not simply repulsive but is at the same time attractive. (346)

[2]See Bishop 68-9 for further discussion of the term ἀποκαλύπτειν in the sense of "to uncover, reveal, disclose."

[3]Wasserman comments on the "gap": "the disparity, disjunction, void, or simply unfilled space that all find at the heart of allegory"; human responses to the gaps are "bridges, copulas, fusions, accommodations, or seams. . . . [T]here must, then, always be a space, a definitive gap that separates the literal from the 'other'. . . . Fill or bridge the gap, and the result is allegoresis" (215).

[4]The label "felix culpa," I believe, exemplifies the relationship between transgression as sin and transgression as a means to truth; the culpa is felix because in wandering/detouring/trans-gressing, one comes to truth, or, in other words, only after erring can one turn towards, or convert to, God. See, for example, Kenneth Burke's discussion of turning and conversion 62-65.

[5]Marcia Colish comments on Augustine's argument: [a] sign is a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression that the thing itself makes upon the senses. . . . Signs, he says, are essentially things, which, in addition to being things themselves, also refer to other things" (Mirror 42). Vance, too, examines Augustinian sign theory in "Poetics of the Law" and "Language as Temporality." For a general sense of metaphor as "the figure of figures, a figure of figurality," see Culler, esp. 189.

[6]Taylor discusses the Narcissus crux in Erring 29-33; The Narcissus theme in medieval poetry is discussed in, among others, Vigne; Goldin; Hult.

[7]See, for example, Ziolkowski, who examines the ubiquity of mirror-metaphor in medieval texts, especially in theologial usages; see also Grabes.

[8]Augustine, too, comments on this relationship in De Doctrina Christiana:

> Huius igitur uarietatis obseruatio duas habet formas; sic enim aliud atque aliud res quaeque significant, ut aut contraria aut tantummodo diuersa significent.

Ross Arthur notes that Augustine here "laid the foundation for a systematic approach to the creative possibilities inherent in the multivalence of signs," and translates the lines as follows:

> This variation takes two forms. Thus one thing signifies another thing and still another either in such a way that the second thing signified is contrary to the first or in such a way that the second thing is entirely different from the first. (8)

[9]The medieval idea of "fin' amors" is discussed in Kelly, who notes on the Roman de la Rose that "Guillaume de Lorris turned the fountain of Narcissus from a mirror of self-love to a source of fin' amors" (125); see esp. 14-25 and 57-95. See also Reiss, "Medieval Sense" 192; Smith and Snow; Calin.

[10]"Courtly"-love, in this sense, is used, as David F. Hult notes,

> to reflect the probable intention of Gaston Paris when he unwittingly coined the phrase some one hundred years ago--namely, to refer to the variety of love relationships and fictional accounts conditioned by the sociocultural milieu of the medieval court. (194 n.24)

Patricia Kean examines the implications of "cortaysye" in terms of "courtly"-love, 189-90.

[11]Whether or not the Pearl-maiden is, indeed, the Pearl-dreamer's daughter is debatable, based primarily on two lines from the text: "Ho wat me nerre þen aunte or nece" (233), and "þou lyfed not two ȝer in oure ȝede" (483)--see,

for instance, Hoffman 73-80; Nicholls 105, who interpret the lines as supporting the daughter-identity. However, the lines are ambiguous and, while suggesting that she is close to the dreamer, the lines do not explicitly establish that she is, in fact, his daughter.

[12]The allegorical possibilities for "pearl" are numerous and varied; see, for example, Bishop 92-98; Kean 138-72.

[13]Ovid tells the Pygmalion story in Book X of the Metamorphoses:

> . . . [Pygmalion] took to art, /Ingenious as he was, and made a creature/ More beautiful than any girl on earth, / A miracle of ivory in a statue, / So charming that it made him fall in love.

For discussion of the episode, see Wilkinson 212-13; Otis 166-230.

[14]The relationship between text and incarnation is discussed in terms of St. Paul's "letter and spirit" by Smalley 1-26. Smalley comments on Jerome's comparison:

> The Word is incarnate in Scripture, which like man has a body and soul. The body is the words of the sacred text, the "letter," and the literal meaning; the soul is the spiritual sense. . . . If, in rare moments of scepticism, a medieval scholar questioned the truth of Scripture, he never doubted that it had letter and spirit; he only feared that the spirit might be bad. (1)

See also Freccero, "Medusa" 119-135.

[15]See Burke 11-42.

[16]Other readers of the poem argue that the Pearl-dreamer's use of "rose" here is a "transformed image," representing "the beauty of the blessed, again drawing on tradition, this time on the Christian concept of the rosa caritatis (rose of heavenly love)"--see the Introduction to the Andrew and Waldron edition of Pearl 31. While the image may, indeed, derive from the rosa caritatis tradition (e.g., Dante's Paradiso, Bonaventura's Vitis Mystica), I would argue that dreamer uses the metaphor without apparent knowledge of these implications; that is, the dreamer may recognize that the rose is a heavenly thing, but he has not

yet reached a point of understanding the metaphoricity inhering in that implicit comparison.

[17]See Andrew and Waldron's notes to text pages 54 and 107, which note that both luf-daungere and luf-longyng are essentially secular terms, though the latter is used by Julian of Norwich ["He is ever turned towards us who live in longing love" (71)]; Andrew and Waldron suggest that the whole line "I dewyne, fordolked of luf-daungere . . ." "is perhaps reminiscent of the phrase quia amore langueo ("for I am sick for love")" from the Canticum Canticorum (Song of Songs) 2.5, 5.7-8.

[18]Dream visions and dream frames are discussed by, among others, Spearing 111-29; Hieatt; Barbara Nolan; and Lynch, who does not deal with Pearl directly but who provides background information and interpretation of the dream-vision tradition. See also, in relation to the use of dream-vision in the Roman de la Rose and the nature of illusion, Peter Allen.

[19]See Wailes, who discusses some allegorical treatments of the parable, 120-4.

[20]See the analysis of the allegorical implications of the fountain in Hult, above, who notes,

> [T]he Lover-as-Narcissus, the reader-as-Narcissus, has but to plunge his fascinated glance, never knowing where truth lies, experiencing a paralysis that is nothing more than the simultaneous joy of discovery and deception. (300)

Hult argues that since the Lover "sees himself and, at the same time, the Other," the question of whose eyes he sees "is not only irrelevant . . . the question is not to be asked" (286). But although whatever he sees in the fountain is important as the motivation for his search, as Hult argues, it is, I believe, important to recognize, too, that the confused, ambiguous, coincidental image that the dreamer sees is significant precisely because it is ambiguous, confusing, and coincidental--and as such calls into question the relationship of image and sign in the blurring of boundaries.

[21]The problem of identifying and ascribing value underscores what, in terms of signification, Saussure calls "the arbitrary nature of signs" (67), for value judgment,

like the relationship between signifier and signified, is, as Mark C. Taylor notes, "historically constituted and always subject to change" ("Introduction: System" 13). In addition to the mutually agreed-upon value, the pearl of great price represents to the Pearl-maiden and the Pearl-dreamer not only great worth in monetary terms, but, more important, great worth in metaphoric terms: sacrifice, i.e., giving up something desirable.

[22]"Arbor vitae" imagery is discussed in Luttrell; Curtius 200-1.

[23]The apparent dialogue of Pearl with Purgatorio was initially brought to my attention by Shoaf, "Transgression." The similarities in situation of the Pearl-dreamer and the Pearl-maiden to Dante and Beatrice are also discussed in Wimsatt 123-36; Kean 120-37; see also Ginsberg, who compares the two poems, though not the guides explicitly, in terms of topos and locus, using Boethius's De topicis differentiis as a starting point.

[24]Studies of Dante and Narcissus include Shoaf, Currency of the Word; Brownlee. The medieval pilgrim/dreamer is examined by Holloway, "The Pilgrim" and developed further in The Pilgrim and the Book.

[25]See also Freccero, "The Final Image"; Gellrich, 157-66; Arbery.

[26]Andrew and Waldron, in their introduction, treat the evocation of the Eucharist as confirmation of the dreamer's transformation (29-36). Theological implications of the sacrament are discussed in Macy; Bettenson, especially 184-186, 189, 243-248.

[27]The OED notes that "take" may mean "to receive into one's body by one's own act; to eat or drink, to swallow (food, drink, medicine, opium, etc.)" (def.13); examples are cited from the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries (though Pearl itself is not listed among them).

[28]See Gellrich 21; Gellrich suggests that the image of eating the book perhaps prefigures Derrida's "deconstructive

project"; see Derrida, Grammatology, especially 6-18 and "White Mythology," especially 226-9.

[29]The possible pun of "lote" meaning both its conventional "happening, chance" and "speech, word" is discussed by Andrew and Waldron 110n.

CHAUCER'S NARCISSUS: TROILUS'S RHETORIC OF ERRANCY

At the end of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, the reader is confronted by an apparent breakdown in the Narrator's control of his text; indeed, some readers find that the voice shifts to the point of a "literary nervous breakdown" interpretation, as the Narrator seemingly disappears in favor of another voice, often construed as that of Chaucer himself.[1] The fiction of the narrative frame seems violated by the final five stanzas of the poem, which treat an essentially Christian theme with only limited reference to the preceding text. A context for the Christian argument is set when, after the telling of the pagan "tragedy," the narrative frame of the text is seemingly broken and the text digresses into a self-conscious awareness of its own language and the inhering potential for error and misreading:

> Go, litel book, go, litel myn tragedye,
> Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
> So sende myght to make in som comedye!
> But litel book, no makyng thow n'envie,
> But subgit be to alle poesye;
> And kis the steppes, where as thow seest pace
> Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.
>
> And for ther is so gret diversite
> In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,
> So prey I God that non myswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge.
> And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,

> That thow be understonde, God I biseche!
> But yet to purpos of my rather speche.
> (5.1786-1799)

Here, the text calls attention to duplicity and ambiguity in language, and reminds its reading audience of the almost unlimited potential for error in reading and interpreting language. The warning is further emphasized by the ironic paradox of the preceding comment: "Beth war of men, and herkneth what I seye!" (5.1785); in essence, the line advises that one be wary of human language yet pay attention to what is being said.

When the final stanzas are taken in conjunction with the preceding pagan text, the two work together to provide a two-fold argument on the word/Word. Here, at the end of the Troilus, the text insists not only on the propriety of a Christian resolution but also on the inadequacy and duplicitousness of the pagan (i.e., human) word:

> Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites!
> Lo here, what alle hire goddes may availle!
> Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites!
> Lo here, the fyn and guerdoun for travaille
> Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!
> Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche
> In poetrie, if ye hire bokes seche!
> (5.1849-1855)

Although the text is clearly informed by a respect for poetry and the written word (e.g., 5.1790-2), here it links language and betrayal by asking first that the reader recognize that the pagan world is "corsed," and then that he behold the "forme" of the ancient texts--

poetry. The text does not condemn the pagan word outright, but it does find the pagan word problematic. Here the text seems to suggest that the audience look not towards the human but towards the divine in order to avoid deception:

> O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
> In which that love up groweth with youre age,
> Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
> And of youre herte up casteth the visage
> To thilke God that after his ymage
> Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
> This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.
>
> And loveth hym, the which that right for love
> Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
> First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;
> For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
> That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
> And syn he best to love is, and most meke,
> What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?
> (5.1835-1848)

The text argues against the false, illusionary nature of human love ("feynede loves"), and suggests instead that one seek a higher, divine love through Christ.[3] Although this solution to thwarted love might seem naive and impractical, it is important not so much as serious advice to be implemented by the audience as a way of life, but rather as a reminder that one's dissatisfaction with human falseness may be resolved if one seeks divine grace; otherwise, one might find the human word completely unredeemed. In addition, the text's evocation of image theology ("To thilke God that after his ymage / Yow made . . .")[4] provides a conclusion to the attention paid to

images ("worldly vanyte") throughout the text, ultimately privileging a Christian resolution.

The text concludes with a suggestion that language is redeemed in the word incarnate, the Word, for the final image of the text comments on the necessity of God if there is to be truth:

> And to that sothefast Crist, that stárf on rode,
> With al myn herte of mercy evere I preye,
> And to the Lord right thus I speke and seye:
>
> Thow oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve,
> That regnest ay in thre, and two, and oon,
> Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscrive,
> Us from visible and invisible foon
> Defende, and to thy mercy, everichon,
> So make us, Jesus, for thy mercy digne,
> For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne.
> (5.1860-1869)

The text here insists upon the truthfulness of God and, by ending with a reference to Christ's humanity (i.e., Jesus the son of "mayde and moder," as well as the Son of God), calls attention to Christ as mediator between the human and the divine.[5]

Moreover, the poetic prayer includes a translated portion of Dante's Paradiso:

> Quell' uno e due e tre che sempre vive
> e regna sempre in tre e 'n due e 'n uno,
> non circunscritto, e tutto circunscrive. . . .
>
> [That One and Two and Three who ever lives
> and ever reigns in Three and Two and One,
> not circumscribed and circumscribing all. . . .]
> (14.28-30)

Dante's recognition of the paradox of the incarnate is

reiterated here; the incarnate is that which circumscribes or comprehends all but is itself uncircumscribable, incomprehensible. What is added to the passage is as important as the translated material, for underscored is the deceit/duplicity of language and its potential threat: its errors, or "foon," are not readily apparent; the "invisible foon" are far more dangerous than those easily perceived. The closing passage reminds the reader of the frailties and foibles of human speech as corresponding to the relationship between sight and deception.

Here, then, is reaffirmed the truthfulness of divine signs and thus their distinction from human ones. As Phillip Pulsiano notes,

> Chaucer is not denying the earthly love of Troilus and Criseyde; but the Christian has available to him a love that is greater, that is everlasting. . . . Chaucer and the narrator, now no longer distinguishable, stand in the presence of the Trinity, both having ascended from the transitory, ambiguous world to a point where, for the first time, language truly and unambiguously signifies its referent. . . . The verbal signs he has called to mind--the Trinity and the Incarnation--propel him beyond the restrictions of ambiguous language: here, then, for the first time in the poem, a true correspondence is established between signs and their significata, and between word and intention. (162-3)

The concluding stanza of Troilus seems to affirm that the divine Word (the divine Sign) constitutes the only instance where language truly means;[6] moreover, the reiteration of the subordinate relationship of man to God (possible only through the mediation of Christ, God in

human, and hence accessible, form) likewise reiterates the omnipotence and authority of the divine.

Of course, Chaucer himself orchestrates the levels of reading and misreading by inscribing his text with a narrative frame seemingly independent of himself; still, the voice of the narrator need not be, at the same time, Chaucer's voice, for "the Narrator," by his frequent commentary on "Lollius"'s source text, can be considered as much a character within the fiction as Pandarus, Troilus, Criseyde, et al. And while the final comments of the Troilus are a clear and extended digression from "Lollius"'s text, which the Narrator insists throughout that he is translating, his earlier comments represent frequent, briefer digressions.[7] It may thus be the Narrator's voice, independent of Chaucer's, that offers the final commentary.

The Narrator often offers his own interpretation of events even as he insists upon the accuracy of his translation. For example, in his description of Criseyde, the Narrator comments that, regarding whether or not Criseyde has children, "I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon" (1.133). Likewise, he later insists that he cannot tell how much time elapses between Criseyde's loyalty and betrayal: "But trewely, how longe it was bytwene / That she forsok hym for this Diomede, / Ther is

non auctour telleth it, I wene. / Take every man now to his bokes heede" (5.1086-9).

Frequently, the Narrator compares his own text to his source, insisting that he is inferior to his source author in his verbal talent:

> But soth is, though I kan not tellen al,
> As kan myn auctour, of his excellence,
> Yet have I seyd, and God to form, and shal
> In every thyng the grete of his sentence;
> And if that ich, at loves reverence,
> Have any word in eched for the beste,
> Doth therwithal right as youreselven leste.
> (3.1324-30)

By insisting on his own inadequacy, the Narrator essentially admits that his own text differs from his source and that he has, indeed, taken liberties with both the story and the language.[8] In addition, he informs his readers that they, too, may fill in the text for themselves--as he, doubtless, has done:

> For myne wordes, heere and every part,
> I speke hem alle under correccioun
> Of yow that felyng han in loves art,
> And putte it al in youre discrecioun
> T'encresse or maken dymynucioun
> Of my langage, and that I yow biseche.
> But now to purpos of my rather speche.
> (3.1331-7)

Yet while the Narrator distances himself from the source--"Forwhi to every lovere I me excuse, / That of no sentement I this endite, / But out of Latyn in my tonge it write" (2.12-14); "Disblameth me, if any word be lame, / For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I" (2.17-18)--he still insists that he follows it.

Of course, the differences are owing as much to language as they are to the Narrator's own reading of his source (after all, the Narrator insists that he is translating) for, as the Narrator notes,

> Ye know ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.
> (2.22-28)

The Narrator's text is thus an interesting and ambiguous mixture of his source text ("As writ myn auctour called Lollius" [1.394]), his own interpretation of that source, and the changes made owing to the very activity of translating itself; the Narrator then goes beyond translation and includes his own interpretation of the pagan text by inserting at the end a Christian didactic. In short, the Narrator's text is clearly his own, and the Christian conclusion that is added to the original story is likewise his own, arising just as do his other critical comments: from his reading of the source text.

The concluding insistence on the stability and reliability of the Word contrasts with the Narrator's emphasis throughout the story of Troilus and Criseyde on the ambiguity and duplicity of the pagan/human word. Up until the ending of the text, Troilus is a story as much

about the abuse of language and rhetoric as it is a story of thwarted love and betrayal; the human word is shown to be double, divided, divisive. Indeed, the "double sorwe" of Troilus is the double-ness of the human word, for his sorrows derive as much from rhetoric and language as from passion and disappointment. At the beginning of the text, the Narrator introduces the link between suffering in love and suffering by language:

> And biddeth ek for hem that ben despeired
> In love, that nevere nyl recovered be,
> And ek for hem that falsly been apeired
> Thorugh wikked tonges, be it he or she . . .
> (1.36-39)

From the very beginning of the text language is an instrument of discord, for language and rhetoric are abused throughout the text: Pandarus first manipulates Troilus, eliciting information about Troilus's infatuation (1.584-833); he then orchestrates the coupling of Troilus and Criseyde (3.1674-80), after convincing Criseyde with his "wordes white" (3.1567); Criseyde betrays Troilus after the exchange, denying to Diomedes that she ever loved anyone but her late husband (5.974-80); Calkas speaks "double wordes," and uses language with "two visages" (5.897-903). In short, language throughout the Troilus is used as an instrument of manipulation, double in its meaning and divisive in its potential for abuse.

The duplicitous nature of the human word is, perhaps, best illustrated through the series of letters (i.e.,

correspondence) in the text.[9] Criseyde uses duplicitous language to encourage Troilus's affections while seeming to discourage them. Criseyde's response to Troilus's profession of love is hardly encouraging, yet it will serve to fuel his interest. As the Narrator comments, her intention is "to love hym unwist, if she myghte, / And guerdon hym with nothing but with sighte" (2.1294-5). Her letter seems innocuous enough:

> Of which to telle in short is myn entente
> Th'effect, as fer as I kan understonde.
> She thanked hym of al that he wel mente
> Towardes hire, but holden hym in honde
> She nolde nought, ne make hireselven bonde
> In love; but as his suster, hym to plese,
> She wolde ay fayn, to doon as his herte an ese.
> (2.1219-25)

Her response here hardly suggests desire for a romantic entanglement, yet it may also be taken as interest dressed up in the language of proper courtship; Criseyde's polite, yet distanced, profession of a desire to please Troilus as a sister is, perhaps, an attempt not to seem too interested too soon. The Narrator, after all, has earlier equated love that has turned out badly with that won too easily: ". . . and thynketh how that ye / Han felt that Love dorste yow displese, / Or ye han wonne hym with to grete an ese" (1.26-28). By denying interest, Criseyde leaves open its possibility.

Pandarus, himself a clever rhetorician and an efficacious manipulator of others by means of the

slipperiness and duplicity of language, delights in her writing, since her doing so facilitates his own scheme of bringing the two together. He notes that her initial resistance will work in her favor as he reiterates the superficiality of infatuation with impressions: "impressiounes lighte / Ful lightly ben ay redy to the flighte" (2.1238-9). Ironically, too, he praises her for becoming more flexible of heart--"And hard was it youre herte for to grave" (1241)--when, of course, she will prove herself later to be "slydynge of corage" (5. 825) much to Troilus's--and even Pandarus's--disappointment.[10]

Criseyde's letter, however, is apparently ambiguous enough for Troilus to find in it the encouragement that he seeks; her promise of love "as his suster" seems not to discourage him, and between the lines--obviously with Pandarus's influence--he reads what is essentially a letter of his own making. He fills in the meaning that he wishes to glean, using whatever ambiguity he can find as a vehicle:

> But ofte gan the herte glade and quake
> Of Troilus, whil that he gan it rede,
> So as the wordes yave hym hope or drede.
>
> But finaly, he took al for the beste
> That she hym wroot, for somwhat he byheld,
> On which hym thoughte he myghtes his herte reste,
> Al covered she the wordes under sheld.
> Thus to the more worthi part he held,

> That, what for hope and Pandarus byheste,
> His grete wo foryede he at the leste.
> (2.1321-30)

Troilus here uses language's slipperiness--its duplicity--to his own apparent advantage; the essential doubleness of language enables Troilus to fill in his own meaning, even as that meaning seems to contradict what is written. Troilus, then, finds encouragement in apparently disencouraging words. The Narrator himself comments:

> But as we may alday oureselven see,
> Thorugh more wode or col, the more fir,
> Right so encrees of hope, of what it be,
> Therwith ful ofte encresseth ek desir;
> Or as an ook comth of a litel spir,
> So thorugh this lettre, which that she hym sente,
> Encressen gan desir, of which he brente.
> (2.1331-7)

Here, Criseyde's word is ambiguous; later, of course, it will become outright deceitful, as she attempts to hide her betrayal.[11]

Troilus will re-read the old letters, looking again for encouragement in the ambiguity of the language, the slipperiness of the words, after the betrayal becomes more and more certain:

> The lettres ek that she of olde tyme
> Hadde hym ysent, he wolde allone rede
> An hondred sithe atwixen noon and prime,
> Refiguryng hire shap, hire wommanhede,
> Withinne his herte, and every word or dede
> That passed was. . . .
> (5.470-5)

Only after Criseyde reiterates her love for him--"As for a <u>frend</u> ye may in me assure" (5.1624)--does Troilus finally

accept that he has been betrayed:

> This Troilus this lettre thoughte al straunge,
> Whan he it saugh, and sorwfullich he sighte.
> Hym thoughte it lik a kalendes of chaunge.
> But fynaly, he ful ne trowen myghte
> That she ne wolde hym holden that she hyghte;
> For with ful yvel wille list hym to leve,
> That loveth wel, in swich cas, though hym greve.
>
> But natheles, men seyen that at the laste,
> For any thyng, men shal the soothe se.
> And swich a cas bitidde, and that as faste,
> That Troilus wel understood that she
> Nas nought so kynde as that hire oughte be.
> And fynaly, he woot now, out of doute,
> That al is lost that he hath be aboute.
> (5.1632-45)

In accepting the betrayal, Troilus recognizes the duplicity of language, that indeed, "Th'entente is al, and nat the lettres space" (5.1630); Troilus is betrayed not so much by Criseyde as by the falseness of language. That is, Criseyde is merely an agent for and a medium of the false word; her words are what have been shown to be divided, divisive, for she betrays Troilus by breaking her oath, by embodying in her "slydyng" heart the slipperiness--and duplicity--of human language. Hence Troilus asks, "Who shal now trowe on any othes mo?" (5. 1681), after finally acknowledging the duplicity himself. The letter, then, not only demonstrates the duplicity of language, but also its potentially abusive instrumentality.

Troilus does recognize in part the flexible, slippery nature of language, though he is apparently oblivious

throughout most of the poem to its potentially disastrous consequences. Troilus's debating the role of Providence and its relationship to free will comments on the relationship between language and necessity:

> I sey, that if the opynyoun of the
> Be soth, for that he sitte, than sey I this,
> That he mot siten by necessite;
> And thus necessite in eyther is.
> For in hym nede of sittynge is, ywys,
> And in the ned of soth; and thus, forsothe,
> There mot necessite ben in yow bothe.
> (4.1030-6)

The emphasis on mutability and flexibilty in human cognition underscores the text's concern with ambiguity and duplicity, for just as necessity gives rise to opinion, so, too, does opinion give rise to necessity. In other words, Troilus calls attention to the possibility of deception arising from necessity: one adjusts one's opinion to fit the facts or, more likely ("yet necessite / Is entrechaunged both in hym and the" [4.1042-3]), the facts are changed to fit the opinion. Although Troilus's immediate concern is the nature of free will, his argument here--implicitly fallacious--underscores the slipperiness of human speech. The Narrator's return to the ambiguity of human speech at the end of the poem likewise underscores its potential deceit and thus lends emphasis to the necessity of Christian faith if one desires to know truth, uncontaminated by human mediation.

Troilus is a text full of misreading, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation; likewise, it is a text full of false words, inadequate reasoning, and erroneous conclusions. In effect, Troilus is an exploration of the problems manifest in and resulting from reading and misreading, problems which may be explored in terms of a Narcissus theme.[12] Evoked throughout the text, Narcissus provides an image of self-discovery which may, in turn, be used as an interpretive apparatus to understand the Narrator's concern with language and deception. The "Narcissus" in the text addresses key epistemological concerns (reading, understanding, interpreting, truth, language, meaning, etc.) that arise throughout the text as the characters--and readers of the text--are confronted by deception, duplicity, ambiguity.

Thematically, Troilus introduces Narcissus to the poem by aligning himself with Ovid's Narcissus, who disdains love--desiring no one and believing love to be a weakness. Ovid's Narcissus essentially disdains any acknowledgement of love or lust, until, of course, he becomes enamored of his own reflection (3.353-5): "multi illum iuvenes, multae cupiere puellae; / sed fuit intenera tam dura superbia forma, / nulli illum iuvenes, nullae tetigere puellae" ["boys and girls / Both sought his love, but in that slender stripling / Was pride so fierce no boy, no girl, could touch him"].

When Troilus is first introduced in the poem, he is chastizing his men for what he believes is their foolish infatuation:

> I have herd told, pardieux, of your lyvyng,
> Ye loveres, and youre lewede observaunces,
> And which a labour folk han in wynnynge
> Of love, and in the kepyng which doutaunces;
> And whan youre prey is lost, woo and penaunces.
> O veray fooles, nyce and blynde be ye!
> There nys nat oon kan war by other be.
> (1.197-203)

The Narrator comments on Troilus's disdainful arrogance ("And with that word he gan caste up the browe, / Ascaunces, 'Loo! is this naught wisely spoken?'" [1.204-5]), hinting, too, at the painful, ironic experience that Troilus will face when he gives in to the very love/lust in which he professes no interest, an irony arising not from blindness, but from sight--sight without insight:

> O blynde world, O blynde entencioun!
> How often falleth al the effect contraire
> Of surquidrie and foul presumpcioun;
> For kaught is proud, and kaught is debonaire.
> This Troilus is clomben on the staire,
> And litel weneth that he moot descenden;
> But alday faileth thing that fooles wenden.
> (1.211-7)

Troilus/Narcissus will eventually be thwarted, indeed defeated, by the love he disdains. As in the case of Narcissus, Troilus will be defeated by faulty choices of his own making--compounded errors, unredeemed, owing to seeing without understanding. His desire will be

perverted, as he turns towards--or, in a sense, seduces--the self.

Troilus's initial error, like that of Narcissus, is the value he places on superficial images: those seen rather than understood. Indeed, when Troilus shifts from arrogant disdain to affected pining, it is not because of any significant understanding or interpretation of Criseyde as sign or image (if one considers a woman a sign); it is because of a single glance, a fleeting look:

> So ferde it by this fierse and proude knyghte:
> Though he a worthy kynges sone were,
> And wende nothing hadde had swich myght
> Ayens his will that shuld his herte stere,
> Yet with a look his herte wax a-fere,
> That he that now was moost in pride above,
> Wax sodenly moost subgit unto love.
> (1.225-31)

Troilus's sudden infatuation emphasizes the danger of relying too heavily on sight and seeing, that taking superficial images too seriously can lead one to misreading or misinterpretation. In Ovid's story, Narcissus, too, finds an image irresistable, and is immediately and easily pleased by it:

> dumque sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit,
> dumque bibit, visae correptus imagine formae
> spem sine corpore amat; corpus putat esse, quod unda est.
>
> [. . . As he tried
> To quench his thirst, inside him, deep within him,
> Another thirst was growing, for he saw
> An image in the pool, and fell in love
> With that unbodied hope, and found a substance
> In what was only shadow.]
> (3.415-7)

Troilus fails to understand that the eye is easily pleased, easily seduced; sight without insight can easily be deceptive, especially when too much credence is attributed to images rather than substance. For Troilus--here aligned with Narcissus--the fleeting glance becomes an obsession; he pines for the image that has captured his attention, yet fails to acknowledge the superficial nature of the image. Fascinated, Troilus allows desire to become an obsession.

The Narrator, too, emphasizes Troilus's infatuation with Criseyde's image, though at this point in the text the Narrator does not acknowledge the superficiality of the obsession:

> And of hire look in him ther gan to quyken
> So gret desir and such affeccioun,
> That in his hertes botme gan to stiken
> Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun.
> And though he erst hadde poured up and down,
> He was tho glad his hornes in to shrinke;
> Unnethes wiste he how to loke or wynke.
> (1.295-301)

Because Troilus pines for an image rather than substance, he in essence duplicates the initial error of Narcissus; he, like Narcissus, will be confronted by an image, "quid videat, nescit; sed quod videt, uritur illo, / atque oculos idem, qui decipit, incitat error" ["Not knowing what he sees, but burning for it, / The same delusion mocking his eyes and teasing"] (3.430-1).[13]

Moreover, when he eventually chooses to pursue the object of his obsession, he is, in essence, attempting to seduce himself, for he pursues an image which he himself perpetuates. Troilus will find that treating an image as a thing of substance--mistaking or confusing signifier for signified, as it were--will prove fruitless, given the dubious significance of the sign that Troilus has invented. Ironically, Troilus will suggest that a causal relationship exists between his seeing and his interest in Criseyde ("O eyen clere, / It weren ye that wroughte me swich wo" [3.1353-4]), yet he fails to understand the extent of it.[14]

Criseyde is, for Troilus, a deceptive sign with a referent that is essentially hollow, superficial--she is counterfeit, constructed, artificial, in that Troilus accords her a significance based only on his presumption that it exists; that is, the significance that Troilus finds in Criseyde is significant only in the sense that Troilus fills in an empty signifier with the meaning he desires.[15] Troilus pines for the image (the sign) but ignores the thing (the referent) that makes the sign a sign, that which gives the sign meaning and significance beyond superficial or hasty attributions. Just as Narcissus pines for an image without considering the consequences, so, too, does Troilus desire the sign without even attempting to consider what he has chosen for

it to signify. Consequently, Troilus feeds his fantasy by making Criseyde over, mentally, in the exact image that he desires, the image of his obsession, using the impression derived from his initial glance as a starting point.

Hence the strongest thematic parallel linking Troilus and Narcissus in the text is Troilus's own "mirror of Narcissus":

> And whan that he in chambre was allone,
> He doun upon his beddes feet hym sette,
> And first he gan to sike, and eft to grone,
> And thought ay on hire so, withouten lette,
> That, as he sat and wook, his spirit mette
> That he hire saugh a-temple, and al the wise
> Right of hire look, and gan it newe avise.
>
> Thus gan he make a mirour of his mynde,
> In which he saugh al holly hire figure;
> And that he wel koude in his herte fynde,
> It was to hym a right good aventure
> To love swich oon, and if he dede his cure
> To serven hir, yet myghte he falle in grace,
> Or ellis for oon of hire servantz pace;
> (1.358-71)

The figure that he sees in the mirror of his mind is not the woman Criseyde; it is a personification of his own desire--a desire perverted--and it is an image of and by Troilus himself, the love object he sees in his own "mirror of Narcissus." Troilus constructs an image of an other, an object of obsession--but like Narcissus, he will seduce himself rather than his object by failing to respect the boundary dividing the fantasy from the reality.

Troilus's confusing and perverting image and substance suggests that his desire is for desire itself. Criseyde is an image that he creates to externalize that desire, just as Narcissus imagines his own image as autonomous and, of course, having desire; Narcissus imagines that his beloved responds to his, Narcissus's, movements, although as his own reflection the image's movements are, of course, simultaneous with his own.[16] The lover of an image sees in that image what he desires, regardless of the reality. Thwarted, then, the lover pines for what he cannot have, with Narcissus eventually dying of grief, and Troilus submitting to Pandarus's conspiratorial maneuvers.

Pining is, for Troilus, not only suffering on account of unrequited love, but also a self-centered exercise in fin' amors; he desires to desire Criseyde, but does not seem really to desire Criseyde herself.[17] For example, after envisioning Criseyde in the mirror of his mind, Troilus sings of his woe--his feelings of desire--yet Criseyde is never even mentioned in the song, nor is any object of love for that matter[18]; it is a song of self, of pining and the effects of unfulfilled desire from the perspective of Troilus:

> If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
> And if love is, what thing and which is he?
> If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?
> If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,

> Whenne every torment and adversite
> That cometh of hym, may to me savory thinke,
> For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke.
> (1.400-6)

In focusing on desire from his own perspective, Troilus not only exacerbates his frustration, but also reinforces the self-centered perspective of his desire. In other words, Troilus's self-centered pining keeps his interests focused on himself and the image of his desire; he does not seem interested in learning more about the object of his professed love. (Interestingly enough, Criseyde will, too, resort to image when addressing Troilus as "Cupides sone, ensample of goodlyheede" in her letter (5.1590): she defines him as an "ensample," an illustration, an example, an image, and not goodness or excellence itself.) Although he is merely playing along with the game of fin' amors, for Troilus the stakes are higher; participation in the code is not itself any grave error, but failing to recognize that one is, indeed, merely playing a game is potentially destructive for all parties involved.

Troilus's initial error in inappropriately ascribing significance to his own deceptive sign is compounded by a second, fatal error: allowing a mediator to interfere with his obsession. Although Troilus seems to suffer for love of Criseyde, it is the superficial, exaggerated pining of fin' amors, an exaggeration which, ironically, emphasizes difference: what the lover sees in the beloved that he

does not see in himself. In other words, the lover's exaggerated praise of his beloved is an attempt to emphasize difference, for the lover praises his own ideals, projected onto a convenient screen; his exaggerating supposed characteristics of the beloved--even if projected--is a superficial attempt to ascribe definition, to establish difference.[19] Yet because the praise is so contrived and artificial, it is really of the self and not the other; it is narcissistic. The lexicon of fin' amors says much more about the speaker's desires than about any specific qualities rightfully attributed to the beloved. Troilus toys with his own affections as he plays the game according to its prescribed rules, and, left alone, the game threatens no one:

> And fro this forth tho refte hym love his sleep,
> And made his mete his foo; and ek his sorwe
> Gan multiplie, that, whoso tok keep,
> It shewed in his hewe both eve and morwe.
> Therfor a title he gan him for to borwe
> Of other siknesse, lest men of hym wende
> That the hote fir of love hym brende.
> (1.484-90)

As the Narrator notes, Troilus plays the game well; he acts the part of the secretive lover, feigning insomnia and anorexia. The feigning is part of the game, again reiterating the exaggerated nature of the code and its rather obvious superficiality. But Troilus's game becomes real when interference is not only tolerated, but invited as well, and the results are predictably disastrous.

Mediation not only contaminates the rules of the fin' amors game with elements of reality, but also it transgresses the fantasy, associating the fin' amors game with reality and blurring the boundary between them. Criseyde the object of Troilus's fantasy becomes Criseyde the target of a seduction game at the hands--or words--of Pandarus. Pandarus transgresses the register of fin' amors by imposing reality upon it; it is Pandarus, not Troilus, who crosses this line, though Troilus is easily manipulated. Pandarus, in essence, turns the image of Criseyde into a living woman, a realistic object of desire and a potentially attainable beloved:

> Quod Pandarus, "Allas! what may this be,
> That thow dispeired art thus causeles?
> What! lyveth nat thi lady, bendiste?
> How wostow so that thow art graceles?
> Swich yvel is nat alwey booteles.
> Why, put nat impossible thus thi cure,
> Syn thyng to come is oft in aventure.
> (1.778-84)

The emphasis here on Criseyde's being alive bridges the gap between the fin' amors fantasy and the real world of human interaction; Pandarus's words mediate even at this point in the text, for they join together the two registers as they will bring together the two lovers--items better left apart.

In this sense, Troilus evokes Dante's Inferno, where the book of Lancelot acts as mediator for Paolo and

Francesca:

> Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto
> di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;
> soli eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto.
> Per più fiate li ocochi ci sospinse
> quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;
> ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.
> Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
> esser basciato da cotanto amante,
> questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
> la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.
> Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:
> quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.
>
> [One day, to pass the time away, we read
> of Lancelot--how love had overcome him.
> We were alone, and suspected nothing.
> And time and time again that reading led
> our eyes to meet, and made our faces pale,
> and yet one point alone defeated us.
> When we had read how the desired smile
> was kissed by one who was so true a lover,
> this one, who never shall be parted from me,
> while all his body trembled, kissed my mouth.
> A Gallehault indeed, that book and he
> who wrote it, too; that day we read no more.]
> (5.127-38)

The text as mediating desire is exemplified here with an obvious caveat: "[t]he 'original' text cannot be recreated, only supplemented," and imitation of the text proves dangerous.[20] Pandarus's text, the image of Criseyde that he embellishes for Troilus's temptations and the "wordes white" that he uses to bring the couple together, is offered to Troilus and Criseyde, and they accept the interference; they do not recognize the danger inhering in the text of Pandarus as well as the text of their own potential experience. Troilus and Criseyde, seduced by a text improperly read, are much like Paolo and

Francesca who fail to realize that "the beauty and intoxication of the text have concealed the deception and destruction it has caused" (Gellrich 150).[21] They, too, "read no more," for they choose to act upon desire and impulse rather than take the time and effort to read closely the text that they are offered; they, too, are perverted by their truncated readings.

Pandarus is, for Troilus and Criseyde, a "Gallehault indeed," for his text brings the two together sexually, and he exemplifies a facet of the problematic of certitude: it is not the text--or mediator--itself at fault, but rather the misreading, or misinterpretation, by those who choose to read it. Pandarus offers the text, but it is Troilus and Criseyde who misread it. They are manipulated not by the colors of rhetoric, but by "wordes white," as Criseyde calls them: "'God help me so, ye caused al this fare, / Trowe I,' quod she, 'for al youre wordes white. / O, whoso seeth yow, knoweth yow ful lite'" (3.1562-8). Hasty conclusions and impulsive behavior characterize those who misread; moreover, the blame for the misreading must fall on Troilus and Criseyde themselves, since the threat of misreading and the interference of duplicitous mediation must be taken as a given in the larger, encompassing context of human language.

In this sense, Troilus and Criseyde may be likened to Ovid's tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, a classic example of precipitous misreading. In 4.1149-218, the Narrator alludes to the Pyramus and Thisbe story, which, by extension, calls attention to boundaries and divisions, exemplified in Ovid's text by the wall that divides the two. Although the wall is initially an impediment to communication, Pyramus and Thisbe communicate through a slit; ultimately frustrated, however ("You envious barrier, / Why get in our way?" [4.73-4]), they are compelled to go beyond the wall. In doing so, they choose to go beyond the boundary, the limit, the context of humanness--and, through a series of gross misreadings, each dies by his own hand.

The tragedy here, if it may be labelled as such, is that neither is prepared to control his own reading; once the boundary is removed and the two are free of the wall, they do not know how to communicate and thus fail to deal adequately with the lioness--the absence of humanity, of human control. The Narrator's allusion in Book 4 reiterates the potential folly of misreading, especially the dire consequences which might arise; the reading of signs and the interpretation of context are crucial not only to one's efficacy with language but also, in a more tangible, concrete sense, to one's very life itself--this

is a lesson of Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe story. Ironically, however, Troilus's death is prevented because his lengthy and exaggerated fin' amors death speech provides enough time for Criseyde to revive, thereby thwarting a fatal conclusion (4.1191-1211).

Troilus and Criseyde set themselves up to be duped by misreading, for they, too, fail to deal adequately with their own communication, the lack of boundary or limit controlling Pandarus's words and their own reading of them, as well as of their words to each other in correspondence. Pandarus avails himself of their apparent discursive naivete and attempts--through mediation--to take control of the relationship between the two. Indeed, Pandarus himself suggests that Troilus should be aware of mediation and its ramifications:

> That is to seye, for the am I bicomen,
> Bitwixen game and ernest, swich a meene
> As maken a wommen unto men to comen;
> Al sey I nought, thow wost wel what I meene.
> (3.253-6)

Pandarus is what results when boundaries are discarded and limits ignored; he, like Ovid's lioness, exemplifies the threat of humanity that threatens the unwary or the uninformed, and, simultaneously, the underlying threat of duplicity and deceit inhering in the human word.

Moreover, Pandarus's motive is hardly noble or charitable; it is duplicitous and narcissistic, since he mediates for his own pleasure; he is, essentially, a

voyeur, bringing Troilus and Criseyde--as Pandarus defines her, the image of that which Pandarus believes Troilus seeks--together for his own amusement. Pandarus, like Troilus and like Narcissus, desires to desire; frustrated and bored himself, he derives excitement of the coupling that he orchestrates, though he deals with images--deceptive signs--rather than the actual people involved whom he manipulates.

Voyeurism is, for Pandarus, a manifestation of narcissism. In playing the voyeur, Pandarus satisfies his need for sexual excitement and manipulation vicariously, by mediating a coupling and, when this union is consummated, by vicariously deriving enjoyment from his knowledge that it is occurring. In fact, Pandarus makes no attempt, really, to hide the delight that he takes in his orchestration:

> Wherfore I am, and wol ben, ay redy
> To peyne me to do yow this servyse;
> For bothe yow to plese thus hope I
> Herafterward; for ye ben bothe wyse,
> And konne it counseil kepe in swych a wyse
> That no man schal the wiser of it be;
> And so we may ben gladed alle thre.
> (1.988-94)

Pandarus demonstrates the duplicity of language in that he is able to manipulate others fairly easily with his deceptive rhetoric, while scarcely concealing that it is, indeed, rhetoric. He finds in language a substitute for what he lacks in life.

Pandarus's narcissism exemplifies, ultimately, Narcissus's failure. In fact, Pandarus's final comment in the text is that he can say no more, that, in effect, his language is unredeemed, that he has no words to make amends:

> If I dide aught that myghte liken the,
> It is me lief; and of this tresoun now,
> God woot that it a sorwe is unto me!
> And dredeles, for hertes ese of yow,
> Right fayn I wolde amende it, wiste I how.
> And fro this world, almyghty God I preye
> Delivere hire soon! I kan namore seye.
> (5.1737-43)

Apparently, Pandarus is unable to find a solution to the problems that his language has created; he can offer no words to fix what his abuse of language has wrought. Eugene Vance comments:

> Pandarus himself is a strategist without telos, a man without center and without substance, a man of "wordes white" (III.1567) whose experience of life is vicarious--that is, made of substitutions, both in his sexual life and in his language. . . .Hence the self-defeating nature of his desire, which is only the desire to desire. ("Mervelous" 281)

Pandarus's function as an instrument of mediation--a Gallehault, or a mirror of Narcissus--allows him to participate not in the coupling itself, but in the seduction and passion which accompany it. Even as he himself calls attention to his instrumentality and mediation, it is too clever for those whom it affects; Pandarus's goal is itself desirable enough for Troilus and Criseyde that they choose not to examine too closely just

how language is abused. In short, Troilus and Pandarus succumb to the error of the unredeemed--the perverted--Narcissus.

Hence Pandarus becomes himself a "sorwful instrument," leading others into error. In fact, Pandarus acknowledges the potential consequences of erring and errancy, even as he leads Troilus into it:

> Ensample wy, se now thise wise clerkes,
> That erren aldermost ayeyn a lawe,
> And ben converted from hire wikked werkes
> Through grace of God that list hem to hym drawe,
> Thanne arn they folk that han moost God in awe,
> And strengest feythed ben, I understonde,
> And konne an errowr alderbest withstonde.
> (1.1002-8)

Likewise, Pandarus uses a lexicon of error and confession when telling Criseyde the anecdote of Troilus's love-longing; here, again, Pandarus focuses on error and redemption while, ironically, using the language of conversion to orchestrate perversion:

> Tho gan I stalke hym softely byhyunde,
> And sikirly, the soothe for to seyne,
> As I kan clepe ayein now to my mynde,
> Right thus to love he gan hym for to pleyne:
> He seyde, "Lorde, have routhe upon my peyne,
> Al have I ben rebell in myn entente;
> Now, mea culpa, lord, I me repente!
>
> O god, that at thi disposicioun
> Ledest the fyn, by juste purveiaunce,
> Of every wight, my lowe confession
> Accepte in gree, and sende me swich penaunce
> As liketh the, but from disesperaunce,
> That may my goost departe awey fro the,
> Thow be my sheld, for thi benignite.
> (2.519-25, 526-31)

In his use of a penitential lexicon, Pandarus essentially employs a rhetoric of errancy; however, the erring advocated by Pandarus is not the kind of errancy that leads one to a recognition of sin and a turning towards God, but rather it is an erring which leads to a seduction.[22] Double, divisive human language requires careful interpretation if its potential deception is to be recognized and dealt with adequately; in thematic terms, Narcissus calls attention to the potential for deceit in the human word, especially the language of desire, for Narcissus is an image of doubling and desire.

As an interpretive tool, Narcissus provides a means of reading Troilus which not only explores the problems associated with the human word but also provides a means of explaining the Narrator's poetic prayer within a context of the abuses of language in the text. Narcissus in the text surfaces both independently of and in coincidence with others playing the part: Troilus, Pandarus, the Narrator, and, finally, the reader of the text. In a Narcissus episode, difference--and hence definition--becomes problematic and indeed paradoxical, for at stake in each Narcissus episode is the concept of difference and, more important, the crucial relationship between difference and definition. Sameness and difference, Self and Other, knowledge and truth--each

component, and indeed each pair, is called into question. The crux of a Narcissus episode is identifying properly "thing" and "image," and, more important, to recognize crucial differences between the two.

When an original is paired with an image of itself, the original and its image seem the same (they look the same, though of course the "mirror image" is reversed), but they are not the same; yet they are not quite different either, for the original provides a shape for its image, but the image is not of the original--it is incomplete, perhaps deceptively so. Augustine comments,

> Where there is an image, there is similitude but not equality . . . as in a mirror, there is the image of a man because it is expressed from him; and it is also necessarily a similitude; nevertheless, there is no equality because many things are lacking in the image which nevertheless are in the thing from which it is expressed. And where there is equality, there is similitude but no image. (Cited by Shoaf, Currency of the Word 19)

Augustine's comment reiterates the danger in any mirroring episode--that is, putting too much stake in an incomplete image--and reiterates the distinction between thing and image. Moreover, it suggests the danger inhering in a Narcissus mirroring episode: confusing equality, similitude, and image. In similar terms, John Brenkman comments that "Narcissus's reflection . . . is less than the body, derived from it, and already linked to death: it is the non-living representation of the body in a space external to the self" (Brenkman 308).[23]

Narcissus initially fails to distinguish between thing and image, and, after conceding that his love object is an image of himself (the thing), he compounds his initial error by pursuing what he then knows to be image. Notes Brenkman,

> In the reflection . . . it is by means of delusion that the other appears as another like the self. In fact, even as there is no (visual) difference between them, the reflected image and what it reflects are divided by an absolute difference. A difference that inhabits and even constitutes the repetition: the original is corpus, its reflection is but umbra or imago. The other is not another like the self but the other of the self. (306)

Treating his imago as another corpus--an other to be paired, or coupled, with his self--Narcissus pursues a hollow, superficial image; yet, at the same time, he recognizes that it is, in fact, only an image. Paradoxically, Narcissus becomes fascinated by an image which is really his own--though he believes it to be an other--and, when his initial error is identified, he pursues his own image as if it were, in fact, the other of his fascination:

> iste eo sum; sensi, nec me mea fallit imago.
> uror amore mei, flammas moveoque feroque.
> quid faciam? roger, anne rogem? quid deinde rogabo?
>
> [The truth at last. He is myself! I feel it,
> I know my image now. I burn with love
> Of my own self; I start the fire I suffer.
> What shall I do? Shall I give or take the asking?]
> (3.463-5)

Narcissus desires the other which is the self and the self which is the other, though neither pursuit can be brought to any fruitful conclusion.

Failing first to distinguish and then to accept the boundary between thing and image, Narcissus essentially attempts to seduce himself. Obviously, he cannot be successful sexually, but he is successful metaphorically. Not only does he initiate desire in the object of his own desire (himself), but he is able to turn the other towards himself, thereby perverting--seducing--his other as he seduces himself. Narcissus's seduction arises out of his failure to acknowledge the emptiness of an image, the fraudulence of a sign with deceptive or ambiguous meaning.

In Ovid's tale, Narcissus of course dies unredeemed, for his perversion is not itself turned away, or converted.[24] Desire is, for Narcissus, unfulfilled not because he is in love with himself--it is doubtful that he is "in love" with himself as opposed to being in a state of desire--but because he fails to recognize the importance of a thing which provides a means of applying significance to a sign; Narcissus is thwarted in his desire because he fails to look beyond the image for something of more substantial meaning. Failing to look in this respect prompts Narcissus to concentrate instead on his impossible infatuation, and his obsession with his own

image turns him towards himself (in the sense that he looks to his own self for fulfillment of his desire) and away from any potential redemption. He seduces his self (and himself), yet both are frustrated in Narcissus's perversion of desire, and no turning away from the perversion--that is, no conversion--occurs. Since redemption depends on conversion, Narcissus forfeits any opportunity for redemption when he chooses death rather than give up his obsession/fascination/desire.

Troilus's apparent concern with Narcissus as an image of failed conversion is part of a larger medieval fascination that ranges from the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Ovidian mythographers, to the French poets Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lorris, and to Dante, among others.[25] Just why the medieval poets find Narcissus so important is perhaps explained by a possible relationship between perversion and conversion. Narcissus, a pagan figure of both perversion and failure, is to the Christian poet a figure of failed conversion, indeed, an archetype of failed conversion. Narcissus is an image of self-reflection, but failed self-reflection, reflection leading to damnation rather than salvation. Narcissus fails to correct this error, or transgression.

The Narrator seems to operate within a context of Pauline Christianity, a religion not only of reflexivity, but one of error as well; that is, Christian salvation is

as contingent upon erring (wandering, transgressing) as it is upon reflection, or meditating on error and redemption. Without error, there is no salvation, for only in recognizing one's error can one repent and find salvation; if one does not wander, then one cannot find the path back towards God. Echoing Augustine, Dante comments at the beginning of Inferno,

> Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
> ché la diritta via era smarrita.
> . . . .
> Io non so ben ridir com'i' v'intrai,
> tant' era pien di sonno a quel punto
> che la verace via abbandonai.
>
> [When I had journeyed half of our life's way,
> I found myself within a shadowed forest,
> for I had lost the path that does not stray.
> . . . .
> I cannot clearly say how I entered
> the wood; I was so full of sleep just at
> the point where I abandoned the true path.]
> (1.1-3, 10-12)

Here, Dante acknowledges that only having wandered from the path is he now able to find his way to salvation; man must face temptation and confront sin in order to find his way back to God, to find a new path after reflecting upon and learning from his error, and, indeed, Virgil notes, "A te convien tenere altro vïaggio" ["It is another path that you must take"] (1.91). The Commedia functions as a commentary on the necessity of error, an ontology of error cor-responding to Christian salvation, arguing the instrumentality of transgression as a means to an ultimate

end; in addition, as Chaucer notes, it corresponds to redemption in and through language as well.

The failure of Narcissus is an error unredeemed; it is a transgression which, while reflected upon, leads not to conversion--or turning around, back to God--but to perversion--or turning away from God and towards the self. While the redeemed Christian experiences conversion, the turning towards God occurs only after he turns first towards himself; only after self-reflection does he recognize his error and chart his course back. Narcissus, then, is an image of thwarted turning, of failed conversion, of error unredeemed in the sense that the turning is away from Otherness and towards the self.

But the medieval Christian poet can use that image of failed reflection and failed conversion--of unredeemed perversion--as a means of exploring the Christian ontology of error. The path of Narcissus is a must for the Christian, provided he turn before he is fully perverted; he converts and is redeemed, but only after the threat of Narcissus's failure is acknowledged and averted. The Christian poet, in alluding to the transgression and ultimate damnation of Narcissus, calls into question the nature of error and its relationship not only to theology but to language--and poetry--as well. Hence the impulse of medieval Christian poets to incorporate Narcissus

images into their poetry, and hence the crucial parallel between Narcissus and medieval Christian image theology: the image of Narcissus provides a crucial rhetoric of errancy which the poet may use to explore possible relationships of language and theology.

The curious combination of psychology, theology, and poetics inhering in the image of Narcissus is complex and, as such, contains multiple possibilities for interpretation. A Narcissus image or figure embodies the Christian's concern with multiplicity and plurality in human/divine transactions. Just as the Christian must avoid reductionistic readings of signs in order to avoid privileging a single meaning to the exclusion of all others, so, too, does Narcissus deal with the threat of univocity given the potential for multiplicity; Narcissus, of course, fails. He reduces the plural to the one (himself) and, as such, denies not only multiplicity in terms of language but also in terms of God: Narcissus is damned because figuratively he reduces the potential for man and God (self and other) to man (self at the exclusion of God). Having denied the plurality of self and other, Narcissus cannot help but be defeated by his own desire--a desire for co-incidence of self and self, erroneously ignoring the necessity of self and other.

And just as Christianity is itself narcissistic, so, too, is the language of Christian theology and, indeed,

language itself.[26] Image theology insists upon reflexivity, yet inhering in any self-reflection is the potential for Narcissus's failure. But while Ovid's Narcissus fails and is doomed, the Narcissus image in medieval texts, including Troilus, need not fail likewise, but may instead use narcissism as a means of finding true Otherness. Ovid's Narcissus is the archetype of failed reflection, and any allusion carries with it the interplay of that failure. However, a "Narcissus" in Troilus has the opportunity to convert; he may attempt to seduce himself, but he can use his own seduction, his own initial perversion, to redeem himself. In other words, a medieval Narcissus can use his perversion as a means of conversion in terms of language and, by extension, theology, if he chooses to do so (the latter contingent upon grace). In its most negative sense, narcissism, or the failure to recognize the paradox of distinction, leads one to frustration and failure; however, by exploring the paradox in terms of language and sign theory, one may come to understand better the arbitrariness and mutability of the sign--in short, to understand the chasm between interpretation and certitude, or knowledge and truth, even if that chasm is not to be bridged.

In terms of language, narcissism is a necessity if any act of interpretation is to occur. Just as the

Christian must follow the path of Narcissus in order to find eventual conversion, so, too, must the reader of the text follow a path of narcissism to find meaning. Only after turning inward (internalizing the text) can one then convert (externalizing the text) his experience into meaning. In other words, besideness emphasises difference; that a word, idea, meaning, message, doctrine, opinion, etc., is beside another reminds one that no matter how similiar the two might be there is difference; the two are similiar because they are different and it is this crucial difference which allows for meaning. The redeemed reader participates in the polysemy of the text, while the failed reader--the unredeemed Narcissus--is trapped within the univocity of the carnal word.[27]

Chaucer is a poet of besideness--repetition, comparison, difference, definition--and Troilus articulates a poetics of besideness. Even as the text evokes the "mirror of Narcissus" as an instrument of fraudulent and counterfeit signs, by the end of the text the reader finds Narcissus--and language--redeemed; repetition holds up thing and image for comparison, even when thing and image seem coincidental, equal, or, tautologically speaking, the same, and when desire is perverted in a turning toward the self.

Chaucer's poetics expresses a recognition that comparison is crucial to definition, for without

comparison there is no difference, and without difference, no definition. This medieval concept of "definition by contraries" is aptly commented upon by Jean de Meun in the Roman de la Rose:

> Ainsinc va des contreres choses,
> les unes sunt des autres gloses;
> et qui l'une an veust definit,
> de l'autre li doit souvenir,
> ou ja, par nule antancion,
> n'i netra diffinicion;
> car qui des .II. n'a connoissance,
> ja n'i connoistra differeance,
> san quoi ne peut venir en place
> diffinicion que l'an face. (21543-52)
>
> [Thus things go by contraries; one is the gloss of the other. If one wants to define one of the pair, he must remember the other, or he will never, by any intention, assign a definition to it; for he who has no under-standing of the two will never understand the difference between them, and without this difference no definition that one may make can come to anything.]

The establishment of difference, then, is the basis for definition, and comparison the means of describing difference; if one is to understand difference and assign definition, then one must find some means of making comparison, even if the two items of a pair are difficult to compare, owing to an apparent similitude and equality.

Augustine, too, comments on the importance of difference in both an epistemological and a theological sense, drawing from both St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians and Ecclesiasticus:

> The opposition of . . . contraries gives an added beauty to speech; and in the same way there is beauty in the composition of the world's history arising from the antithesis of contraries--a kind of eloquence in events, instead of in words. This point is made very clearly in the book Ecclesiasticus, "Good confronts evil, life confronts death: so the sinner confronts the devout. And in this way you should observe all the works of the Most High; two by two; one confronting the other." (DCD XI.18)

Interestingly enough, Pandarus echoes Augustine's thinking, even as he will pervert it for his own narcissistic uses:

> Thus often wise men ben war by foolys.
> If thow do so, thi wit is wel bewared;
> By his contrarie is every thyng declared.
>
> For how myghte evere swetnesse han ben knowe
> To him that nevere tasted bitternesse?
> Ne no man may ben inly glad, I trowe,
> That nevere was in sorwe or som destresse.
> Eke whit by blak, by shame or worthinesse,
> Ech set by other, more for other semeth,
> As men may se, and so the wyse it demeth.
>
> Sith thus of two contraries is o lore,
> I, that have in love so ofte assayed
> Grevances, oughte konne, and wel the more,
> Counseillen the of that thow art amayed.
> (1.635-48)

Pandarus recognizes the importance of comparison--too well, perhaps--and uses it to manipulate those who are not cognizant of counterfeits in the "two by two" opposition.

Troilus, too, employs an epistemology of contraries as per Jean de Meun in his letter to Criseyde:

> Myn eyen two, in veyn with which I se,
> Of sorwful teris salte arn waxen welles;
> My song, in pleynte of myn adversitee;
> My good, in harm; myn ese ek woxen helle is;
> My joie, in wo; I kan sey yow naught ellis,

> But torned is, for which my lif I warie,
> Everich joie or ese in his contrarie.
> (5.1373-9)

Here, Troilus recognizes that as he experiences the opposites--contraries--of his prior experiences, he comes to understand both better. Previously, the Narrator had claimed that he could not define Troilus's sorrow:

> Who koude telle aright or ful discryve
> His wo, his pleynt, his langour, and his pyne?
> Naught alle the men that han or ben on lyve.
> Thow, redere, maist thiself ful wel devyne
> That swich a wo my wit kan nat diffyne.
> On ydel for to write it sholde I swynke,
> Whan that my wit is wery it to thynke.
> (5.267-73)

But Troilus's exposition on the countraries provides a means of understanding his sorrow; one can look to the intensity of his earlier joy to understand the magnitude of his distress. This Boethian concept of later sorrow defining earlier joy is reiterated throughout the Troilus, for the text is in part a study of consolation--consolation which arises from the recoginition of contraries and their interplay.[28]

Narcissus, however, initially threatens definition, because comparison becomes problematic when an apparent, but false, tautology of images/reflections is involved. In establishing besideness (comparison) Narcissus in the Troilus calls attention not only to plurality (polysemy) but, more important, the ambiguity (or duplicity) inherent in the comparison. The potential for misreading inhering

in any instance of plurality underscores the threat of duplicity, from misinterpretation of signs in one's reading to outright deceit perpetrated by the rhetorical manipulation of an other.

Chaucer's treatment of the Narcissus theme through Troilus, Pandarus, and the Narrator underscores a crucial relationship between language and theology: that the carnal, or literal, word in signifying an immediate and proper sense signifies, too, a spiritual, or metaphoric, sense. That is, the literal word signifies without mediation (other than the mediation of the word at its most literal level, i.e., its most proper association), yet simultaneously--to the metaphoric or usurpative reader--offers multiple meanings on figurative levels. Metaphoric meanings replace (or supplement) literal ones, and although the literal word is itself metaphoric--"sign" can work only figuratively, after all--the metaphoric readings enable the spiritual reader to participate in theological multiplicity.

By reading both literally and metaphorically, one might become aware of not only the immediate--and literal--truth but also the interpretive possibilities of metaphoricity, possibilities which may bring one closer to salvation. Metaphoricity allows for the relationship of two-ness (self and other) but does not deny the one-ness

of the word's proper sense. The Narcissus theme of the Troilus reiterates the two-ness of salvation and the potential threat of one-ness to one's conversion; just as the Narcissus threatens himself with the perversion of his own one-ness with himself--a privileging of self to the exclusion of other-ness but simultaneously a desire for the other-ness which the self provides yet is denied--so, too, does the carnal reader threaten to reduce the plural to the singular.

Concerns with relationships of language and theology in terms of the literal and the metaphoric are, of course, explored prior to Chaucer, most notably by Paul, Augustine, and Dante. Paul's cautioning that "the letter kills and the spirit quickens" ("littera enim occidit, Spiritus autem vivificat"; "littera est carnis est mors") [2 Cor 3.6] warns against carnality--or literalness--in language; adhering to the letter denies the possibility of multiplicity, for if one insists on literalness then one insists on a single, proper sense to the exclusion of other, multiple meanings. Hence Augustine, in defining metaphoric substitution in language, labels metaphoricity as usurpative ("metaphora est usurpata translatio"), but points out that the usurpation is desirable when higher (i.e., theological) meanings usurp lower--albeit proper--ones, such as in the interpretation of Scripture.[29]

The relationship between language and theology is, perhaps, best exemplified by the word/Word, for the Incarnation of God's word--the Son/Word--not only allows man to participate in a relationship with God but also enables him to understand how to understand. In other words, man must learn to read those signs which will, in turn, lead him to God, always aware of the potential for deceptive meanings to be erroneously derived by the ignorant, careless, or carnal reader. Eugene Vance comments,

> In St. John, where the whole of existence is equated with the Word, sign theory took on an ontological dimension whose consequence was that Christ as Son and perfect sign of the Father, a sign admitting no difference (dissimilitudo) between signifier and signified, became the negative reference point for all human discourse in its radical equivocity. ("Mervelous" 257)

In short, in learning to read signs, one sets oneself on a path towards God, where one might ultimately find salvation; although one finds salvation only by God's grace, one may come to know God's grace by participating within the divine system by means of understanding God's Word. Since only God's Word is a sign whose signifier and signified have no distance--i.e., difference--between them, the potential for misreading must constantly be acknowledged and averted while the possibilities of multiple interpretations are explored, a potential Chaucer explores by incorporating Narcissus in his text.

The ending of Troilus reflects both Chaucer's apparent concern with the potential deception inhering in the ambiguity and mutability of signs and their interpretation and the Narrator's apparent concern that these deceptions might confuse or distort the truthfulness and reliability of the divine Word. In this sense, Troilus participates in the on-going debate during the fourteenth century of truth and knowledge, divine and the secular, theology and philosophy; this debate arises out of contemporary epistemological dissatisfaction with the orthodoxy known as the Augustinian synthesis:

> [Augustine] gave up words for the Word and became the most influential formulator and teacher of the orthodoxy usually designated by his name, the Augustinian synthesis. With the certainty of revealed truth at its core, Christian doctrine left little scope for doubt or for empirical investigation. . . . The Bible, God's Word, was the only valid text, and it linked man indissolubly with Truth. Christian allegoresis was a method of interpreting the world in accordance with God's univocal Truth. (Jordan 10-11)

But Augustinian synthesis, at odds with developments in mathematics and the sciences, subsequently gave rise to a "new pluralism," or via moderna, that was inaugurated, paradoxically, as a new return to the old rhetoric in which, as Robert M. Jordan notes, "language is a medium distinct from its referent and capable of systematic cultivation and systemization" (12).

The Narrator's insistence on the certitude offered by the divine Word seems, at first glance, at odds with the developing via moderna and its insistence on humanism. After all, Troilus ends with a poetic prayer that not only affirms but also demands the supremacy of the Word; in addition, the prayer cites Dante, who himself affirms divine truth throughout the Paradiso. (The Narrator reiterates, too, the superficial, empty love-game of fin' amors, best avoided in favor of Christian love: "And syn he best to love is, and most meke, / What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?" (5.1847-8)--ironic, perhaps, given the exaggerated, artificial nature of the poem's last few stanzas). But Chaucer, a poet of besideness, aligns the doxa poetically, side by side, in order to establish comparison; neither is privileged to the exclusion of the other, for the doxa, while apparently in contradiction, reside within the single text.

The Narrator of the Troilus himself seems, at times, perilously close to failure of Narcissus, yet eventually he chooses conversion over perversion, and, indeed, the poem ends with an implicit doxa on the interminable gap between knowledge in its human sense and divine truth. The Narrator, by the end of his text, has come to understand the empty nature of images, the fragile nature of desire, and the harsh consequences of misreading signs and texts. By transgressing the fraudulent sign and

seeking meaning, the Narrator apparently learns what Troilus and Pandarus fail to understand: that those who put too much stake in an image will live a life as empty and meaningless as the empty sign with which they become obsessed; fascination with an image will, ultimately, prove fruitless. The plurality of meaning afforded by the open-endedness of the text therefore invites each reader to interpret for himself--forewarned of the dangers of misreading and guided towards redemption by a poetics of besideness manifest throughout the text in images of reflection, error, and, ultimately, conversion.

The Narrator mediates, bringing together reader and text. In this sense, the mediator/Narrator is an instrument of reflection, a "mirror of Narcissus." The mediation brings together not only reader and text but man and God as well; after reading as Narcissus, "per speculum aenigmate" ("through a glass in a dark manner"), the converted Narcissus experiences the Word "facie ad faciem" ("face to face") [1 Cor 13.12]. Thus while the text orchestrates a seduction, it is a seduction which may lead the reader to a coincidence with spiritual otherness, where the reader/Narcissus may find himself redeemed.

Notes

[1]The problem of voice at the end of the Troilus has been commented on extensively; some discussions include Donaldson 115-30; Wetherbee 224-43; Kaminsky 83-94.

[2]I have opted to use the Shoaf edition for this chapter because its critical apparatus most closely suits my own perspective.

[3]On the text's "feynede loves," see Newman.

[4]The concept of image theology as used here derives from Augustine:

> . . . Augustine turned inward and reflected upon his own personality. . . . Augustine found the self to be complex and inwardly divided. In an effort to interpret the insights derived from his self-analysis, Augustine argues that, since man is created in the image of God, the structure of selfhood must mirror the structure of the divine. . . . Created in the image of God, the human subject reflects divine subjectivity. The self, therefore, can be defined in terms of self-relation. . . . The transcendent God, who can never be fully known in Himself, must be known indirectly, through a mediator. For the Christian, the divine Logos, Christ, effects this mediation. (M. Taylor, Erring 38-40)

[5]See Donaldson 130; Shoaf, Currency of the Word 156-7.

[6]See also Vance, "Mervelous":

> Finally, Chaucer directly addresses the source of all true language, the logos itself in the person of Christ, who is a signifier consubstantial with the God he perfectly signifies, and whose triune mystery is an enigma that is not poetic (hence, apocryphal) but divine. Trouthe, then, lies less in worldly things to be spoken or learned than in a movement, a progress leading first from poetic fable to moral history, next to philosophy, and finally from prayer to illumination. (309)

[7]See, for example, 1.393-9; 2.12-18, 47-49; 3. 1324-37; 5.1086-92, 1753, 1765-71.

[8]The Narrator as translator is discussed by Shoaf, Currency of the Word 123-57; the ambiguous voice of the Narrator is discussed by Gordon, esp. 61-92. On Chaucer's own translating, see Howard, Chaucer: His Life, His Works, His World:

> What the narrator does with his old book, Chaucer was doing with a shelf of them. It was the medieval way of composing to draw on carefully chosen models, and Chaucer brought to his adaptation of the Filostrato ideas and actual passages from the Teseida, Dante, Ovid, Virgil, Statius, and others. He aspired in the Troilus to leave the company of "makers" and join these more elevated "poets." (350)

[9]The letters in the Troilus are analyzed in greater detail by McKinnell.

[10]A relationship between mutability and mediation is explored in Shoaf, Currency of the Word 107-9; Criseyde's being "slydyng of corage" is discussed by Mizener; see also Leyerle.

[11]See, for example, 5.1422-31; 1604-24.

[12]Analogies between Troilus and Narcissus are discussed by Shoaf, Currency of the Word 111-13; Wood 79-81; Wetherbee 60-61; Burlin.

[13]Although I use "Narcissus" in terms of rhetoric and poetics rather than psychoanalysis, Julia Kristeva's examination of Narcissus has informed or provoked my own thinking; see Tales, in which Kristeva examines Ovid's Narcissus and the tale's impact on other literature, including the Roman de la Rose, Dante's Commedia and others, noting,

> The Middle Ages take up again the theme of Narcissus in order to condemn, essentially, what it contributes to the baneful human bent toward the seeming falsehood, and even fraud, which accompany self-love, at the expense of love for true divine values. (127)

[14]Knoespel notes, "In antiquity the process of falling in love was conceived as an attraction to an image of the self seen in the retina of the beloved" (11). This connection between eyes and falling in love is ubiquitous throughout the fin' amors tradition; see, for example, Goldin; Ferrante; Hult.

[15]My own understanding of sign theory in Middle Ages has been enhanced in part by Colish, Mirror; Vance, "Augustine's" and "Language as Temporality"; Jeffrey; Arthur.

Modern sign theory, of course, does not always concur with medieval concepts; see, for example, Eco's "Mirrors," in which he argues against mirror-image as sign.

[16]See Brenkman 313: "Narcissus imagines the temporal delay of a reply. . . .He describes an illusory delay between his own gestures and those of the image."

[17]On the fin' amors tradition, see Reiss, "Medieval Sense"; Reiss argues that Chaucer is, perhaps, "purposefully undercutting it and ironically making it seem more like the illicit love laughed at in Ovid's Ars Amatoria and Andreas's De arte honeste amandi than like anything legitimate or ideal." See also Peter Allen; Benson; Howard, "Courtly Love." The connection between eros and language, which clearly informs the fin' amors tradition, is examined by Vance, "Mervelous," who comments that Troilus "is a discourse where verbal signs are divorced from their ordinary functions of communicating in order to become objects of desire in their own right." See also Freccero, "Medusa":

> Ever since Augustine, the Middle Ages insisted upon the link between eros and language, between reaching out in desire for what mortals can never possess and the reaching out of language toward the significance of silence. . . . The search for the self which is the quest of the poet can only be accomplished through the mediation of the imagination, the Narcissus image which is at once an image of the self and all that the self is not. (130)

[18]The stanzas of Troilus's song are largely based on Petrarch's eighty-eighth sonnet, though, ironically, the Narrator insists that they are "As writ myn auctour called Lollius. . . . every word right thus" (1.394-7). Chaucer's

debt to Petrarch has often been noted; see, for instance, Kaminsky 21; Karla Taylor 110-11; and the notes by Stephen Barney included in The Riverside Chaucer.

Note, too, the similarities between the images of heat and lust in the song and those of Ovid's Narcissus: ". . . Whenne every torment and adversite/ That cometh of hym, may to me savory thinke,/ For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke" (1.404-6), and "dumque sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit, / dumque bibit, visae correptus imagine formae / spem sine corpore amat" ["As he tried / To quench his thirst, inside him, deep within him, / Another thirst was growing, for he saw / An image in the pool. . ."] (3.415-7); "And if that at my owen lust I brenne, / From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?" (1.407-8), and "uror amore mei, flammas moveoque feroque. / quid faciam?" [". . . I burn with love of my own self; I start the fire I suffer. / What shall I do?"] (3.463-5).

[19]The beloved as an object shaped by the desires of the lover here evokes Ovid's Pygmalion story, where the sculptor Pygmalion sculpts the image of that which he desires; see Metamorphoses 10.242-98; see also commentary on the Pygmalion episode in Wilkinson; Otis 166-230.

[20]Karla Taylor explores in great detail the relationship between the Paolo and Francesca story in Dante and its impact on Chaucer's Troilus, emphasizing the crucial role of mediation:

> Like Inferno V, Chaucer's poem tells the story of two lovers brought together by a bookish mediator, written by a poet who poses as a go-between. . . . The Troilus as a whole bears no great resemblance to the Lancelot romance. But Pandarus is like Gallehault, both as a go-between and as a faithful friend (64).
> . . . [T]he author of the Troilus, both as the creator of a romance and as a go-between, resembles Pandarus, the author of the inner love affair. But the go-between, Pandarus, himself resembles a book. He is a walking encyclopedia of sententiae, never without an appropriate saying to suit any occasion (53).

See also pages 50-77, 228-35.

[21]Gellrich notes, "From the many critical responses that this canto has attracted, one point has claimed central attention: the function of literature as a mediation of desire" (149).

[22]On erring and errancy, see Mark C. Taylor, Erring: Erring, then, is "wandering, roaming; deviating from the right or intended course; missing the mark." The semantic branches of err spread to errancy, erratic, erratum, erre, erroneous, and errant. . . . The erring a/theologian is driven to consider and reconsider errant notions: transgression, subversion, mastery, utility, consumption, domination, narcissism, nihilism, possession, uncanniness, repetition, tropes, writing, dissemination, dispossession, expropriation, impropriety, anonymity, spending, sacrifice, death, desire, delight, wandering, aberrance, carnival, comedy, superficiality, carnality, duplicity, shiftiness, undecidability, and spinning. (12)

Although Taylor argues that ". . . there is no transcendental signified to anchor the activity of signification" (16), his explorations of erring and errancy are, nonetheless, useful for understanding the important, if paradoxical, relationship between erring and salvation, since the process of errancy prompts one "to reexamine and reformulate established assumptions and presuppositions" (17), a position not inconsistent with conversion.

[23]See also Kristeva, who notes,

> We are here confronted with what we can but call the vertigo of a love with no object other than a mirage. Ovid marvels, fascinated and terrified, at the sight of a twin aspect of the lure that will nevertheless continue to nourish the West's psychological and intellectual life for centuries to come. On the one hand there is rapture at the sight of a nonobject, simple product of the eyes' mistake; on the other, there is the power of the image. (Tales 104)

[24]On conversion, see Burke, esp. 104-17.

[25]See Knoespel 23-58.

[26]Hence Augustine in De Trinitate, notes Colish in The Mirror of Language, "confines himself to the question of how God may be known through the Trinitarian analogies in the human soul," and argues that "[w]e can know God as he is only if we become like him . . . and we can become like him only by knowing him." Augustine argues that "Love of self . . . can be understood in the interaction of the soul, its knowledge, and its love. The soul must know itself

before it can love itself, and, concurrently, it must possess the desire of a lover in order to seek self-knowledge in the first place" (49-54). See Augustine, De Trinitate 8.10.14, 9.2.2-9.5.8, 10.11.17-18, 13.19.24, and 15.9, especially; Augustine argues in regard to St. Paul's "per speculum aenigmate,"

> We have, therefore, tried to do this in order that through this image which we are, we might see Him by whom we have been made in some manner or other, as through a mirror. (15.8.14)

See also Zweig 26-36.

[27]In distinguishing polysemy from univocity in terms of interpretation, Dante notes,

> For the clarification of what I am going to say, then, it should be understood that there is not just a single sense in this work: it might rather be called polysemous, that is, having several senses. For the first sense is that which is contained in the letter, while there is another which is contained in what is signified by the letter. The first is called literal, while the second is called allegorical, or moral or anagogical. (Cited by Miller 112-13)

[28]Francesca, too, makes note to Dante: "Nessun maggior dolore / che ricordarsi del tempo felice / ne la miseria; e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore" ["There is no greater sorrow / than in thinking back upon a happy time / in misery--and this your teacher knows"] (5.121-3).

[29]Background material for Augustine's treatment of signs is provided in Marcia L. Colish, The Stoic Tradition, especially 169-79; see also Jackson.

LANGLAND'S CHRISTIAN NARCISSUS: METAPHORIC COLLOCATION AND THE IMAGO DEI IN PIERS PLOWMAN B

Piers Plowman is a poem as much about truthfulness in language as it is about spiritual salvation; Langland's concern with the instability and ambiguity of verbal signs parallels Will's concern with the means to salvation; both quests are contingent upon interpreting and understanding "truth."[1] The first passus, with its explication of "truth," sets up the poem as a whole and thus provides clues as to how one might approach the text. Mary Clemente Davlin notes that

> Although it has been analyzed more often than other parts of Piers Plowman, Passus I remains extraordinarily difficult--both puzzling and seemingly inexhaustible in meaning. It has been studied more than other passus not only because it begins the action of the poem, but also and especially because in a sense it contains the whole poem within itself. (25)

Often puzzling, obscure, and, indeed, enigmatic, the language of Piers Plowman is complex and challenging, offering the reader an opportunity to explore, along with Will, "what [may] this [be] to mene?" (I.11).

In Passus I of the B-text, Holi Chirche provides a theological directive to Will: "Mesure is medicine." Instructing Will on the necessity of "three thynges," Holi Chirche notes that,

> Mesure is medicine, though thow muchel yerne.
> Al is nought good to the goost that the gut asketh,
> Ne liflode to the likame that leef is to the soule.
> Leve nought thi likame, for a liere hym techeth--
> That is the wrecched world, wolde thee bitraye.
> (35-39)

At her most literal, or proper, level, Holi Chirche calls attention to the need for moderation; moderation, she argues, is a necessary part of fulfilling the wishes of the "fader of feith," who has ordained clothing, food, and drink common to all. Just as the earth is commanded to provide "liflode at nede/ In mesurable manere," so, too, is the recipient expected to partake but "nought out of reson" (14-25). Here, Holi Chirche's understanding of the propriety of worldly goods echoes Augustine's:

> First, then, O Lord our God, our Creator, we must learn to keep our love of worldly things in check, for the evil life we lived amongst them was leading us to death. . . . We must obey in full the message which you gave to us through your apostle when you said: Do not fall in with the manners of this world. (Conf. XIII.22)

Holi Chirche's "mesure" directive thus parallels the balance advocated by Augustine's own directive of keeping desires "in check."[2]

"Mesure," according to the MED, suggests temperance, moderation, balance, restraint; it also denotes an estimate of value, an ascertainment of quantity, a judgment according to some prescribed standard. When Holi Chirche notes that "Mesure is medicine," she therefore calls attention to balance and comparison.[3] Holi Chirche

advises Will to adhere to a code of temperance regarding those worldly things which, as she notes, God himself has deemed necessary to maintain the corporeal body during its time on earth. As a theological directive, "mesure" remedies or protects against carnal excess in food, drink, and clothing--worldly goods, necessary in proper quantity, but a potential source of injury if abused by overindulgence. Indeed, Augustine's conversion is itself owing to "mesure," for St. Paul's invective supplies Augustine with new rules of conduct, rules which immediately seem true to him:

> . . . [I]n silence I read the first passage on which my eyes fell: Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites. I had no wish to read more and no need to do so. (Conf.VIII.12)

In the conversion scene, Augustine asserts the importance of temperance, that one must keep "nature's appetites" in check; here, Augustine grapples with carnality in its most basic sense, i.e., desires of the flesh.

But it is important, too, to realize that Augustine--and hence Holi Chirche, who clearly draws from Augustinian tradition--advocates balance, not total abstinence from all that is carnal; indeed, total avoidance of carnal necessities would, obviously, lead to physical death, just as excess leads to spiritual death. Moreover, carnal

necessities, Holi Chirche indicates, have been ordained by God Himself, for man's use. Bernard of Clairvaux expresses the necessary balance between the spiritual and the carnal:

> We also love our spirit in carnal fashion when we break it through prayer, with tears, sighs, and moans. We love our flesh with a spiritual love when, after we have subjected it to the spirit, we exercise it spiritually for the good and watch with judgment over its conservation. (O.C., IV, 69, cited by Kristeva, Tales 167)

Holi Chirche's directive calls for balance through moderation--man must learn to measure what is needed and to avail himself accordingly.

An epistemological directive, less obvious, perhaps, than its theological counterpart, may also be derived from Holi Chirche's collocation of "mesure" and "medicine." Holi Chirche evokes Pauline theology's insistence upon avoiding carnality with regard to language, an insistence upon metaphoric rather than literal readings of Scripture. For just as "mesure" cautions against excess in the consumption of worldly goods, "mesure" can also provide remedy and protection against carnal excess in the literalness of the human word. As St. Paul notes, "the wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace," since "the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth" (Rom 8.5; 2 Cor 3.6). Thus Holi Chirche's cautioning Will to observe temperance in regard

to carnality may, by extension, likewise caution him against carnality in language.

This can perhaps be better understood if the metaphoric collocation "Mesure is medicine" is examined within a context of Augustinian sign theory. Langland, following St. Augustine, insists upon a model of signification which underscores a crucial relationship between language and theology: that the carnal, or literal, word signifies an immediate and proper sense, yet the same word also signifies a spiritual or metaphoric sense. While the literal word is itself metaphoric, in that a verbal sign is used to signify a literal, proper sense, it is the spiritual or metaphoric sense--in addition to the literal--that is crucial to one's understanding of God. Augustine, following Paul, cautions frequently against that literalness which is carnal. And indeed, Augustine's conversion is, like Paul's, a direct result of his seeing beyond the carnal to the figurative or spiritual, of his acquiring a new and enlightening means of reading: ". . . the obtuse reading of faithless literalists [is] transformed, by unveiling, into a reading of the same text in a new light" (Freccero, "Medusa" 123).[4]

In pursuing the letter, the carnal reader is too easily satisfied with too little, content to stop too

soon. The carnal reader fails to grasp the figurative signification of the verbal sign and is instead trapped within the univocity of the carnal word; for him, language fails to signify beyond its most proper level, and figurative--spiritual--meaning is ignored. However, to read Scripture successfully, a transfer (metaphora) of meaning is necessary, even as such transfer complicates signification. Metaphor, according to Augustine, is usurpative; words must be divested of their proper meanings and ascribed improper ones if they are to signify beyond the carnal. Hence Augustine notes in Contra mendacium that metaphor is the "usurpation of the proper by the improper (hoc est, de re propria ad rem non propriam uerbi alicujus usurpata translatio)" (Vance 9), and, likewise, Isidore in Etymologiae: "Metaphora est verbi alicuius usurpata translatio" (1.37.2, cited by Shoaf, YLS 130). Metaphoric, or figurative, language usurps meaning and relocates it to another verbal sign, transferring meaning from one word to another.

In De Doctrina Christiana, Augustine distinguishes between the signum proprium, which signifies literally, and the signum translatum, which signifies figuratively; he argues further that "signa propria may best be understood by the study of languages and textual criticism. Languages are also helpful in understanding signa translata, but even more important to the exegete

here is a knowledge of arts, sciences, and institutions of all kinds" (Colish 42). Signification, then, is contingent upon the relationship of language and property, in the sense that denotations of "proper" and "improper" govern its levels. R.A. Shoaf notes,

> In the Middle Ages "proper" denoted what we mean by the word "literal"--the first, the primary sense of a word. This sense is the "property" of the word. Extraliteral or metaphoric senses of a word were indicated, most suggestively, by terms like "usurpata translatio." These senses are "improper": they are not the property of the word; they are brought to the word, added to it, imposed upon it. (Currency of Word 33-34)

Metaphoric, or "improper" meaning is thus imposed from without, deriving from a variety of sources, at the whim of the reader; the senses of the word are negotiated by the usurpative reader, who transfers meaning. Transferred meaning--metaphora--becomes multiple or, as Dante notes in his epistle to Can Grande, "there is not just a single sense. . .it might rather be called polysemous, that is, having several senses."[5] Hence the instability of metaphoric collocation: a single meaning or signification obtains at any single moment of perception, yet the polysemy of the verbal sign renders that perception unstable, as multiple meanings compete for semantic space and "meaning" thus shifts as varying senses are construed or applied. "Meaning" is thus mutable and unstable, seemingly arbitrary perhaps and indeed subjective but

nonetheless polysemous. The give-and-take of usurpative reading, then, insists upon a dynamics of polysemous signification.

A usurpation of meaning is evident in Holi Chirche's metaphoric collocation, "Mesure is medicine," thereby calling attention to its own poetic process. It is a comparison that defines itself as comparison; "mesure" describes the poetic process of usurpative collocation, in that the balance, moderation, and mediation signified by "mesure" describe the poetic process of transfer, while the collated "medicine" describes "mesure" by transferring--or usurping--its own connotations. "Mesure" and Holi Chirche thus caution against carnal reading by calling attention to the polysemy of "mesure," for Holi Chirche recognizes that meaning must be open, multiple. For Holi Chirche, then, words must express "an expanding fullness of meaning, as if one meaning were inside another by analogy, etymology, sound, or logical implication" (Davlin 43), and they must do so free of carnal rigidity and restraint. Thus as Holi Chirche cautions against carnality, she does so metaphorically; she avoids carnal rigidity even as she calls attention to it, insisting instead on polysemy.

But with many meanings to choose from, how does one determine "truth" in language? Indeed, how might one define "truth"? Throughout the first passus, Holi Chirche

offers a series of definitions of "truth," calling attention not only to the polysemy of the word "truth," but to the necessity of polysemous reading as well. Holi Chirche thus provides Will not only with specific interpretations of lessons to be gleaned from reading Scripture, but also of interpretive methodology itself--the means by which he might learn to read and to interpret for himself.

In the first passus, Will insists on carnality even as Holi Chirche attempts to lead him to spirituality. She defines "truth" for Will by means of metaphoric collocation, noting that "Treuthe is tresor," yet Will apparently misses the point: "Yet have I no kynde knowynge," quod I, "ye mote kenne me bettre / By what craft in my cors it comseth, and where" (138-139). Rather than look for any figurative meaning in her definition, Will looks inward--carnally--"in [his] cors," for some power or capacity within his own body to understand. Holi Chirche instructs Will regarding the necessity of reading figuratively, though Will fails to understand her message. Her outburst of frustration ("Thow doted daffe!. . . To litel Latyn thow lernedest. . . ." [140-141]) reiterates the polysemy of the "Holy Writ," for the "Latyn" of Scripture insists upon the figurativeness of language as an instrument of understanding God's Word/word. In addition,

her emphasis on "Latyn" calls attention to the underlying source of Will's apparent theological ignorance: it is language itself that Will has not yet learned to appreciate adequately, and his ignorance of signification processes impinges upon his attempts to understand theology.

But various theological and epistemological implications of Holi Chirche's directive are incorporated throughout the text of Piers Plowman, thereby providing a series of opportunities for both Will and the reader to develop an understanding of hermeneutic processes through awareness of metaphoric structures as the text progresses. In this sense, the text aligns Will and reader as spiritual pilgrims, seeking the metaphoricity that leads to understanding, be it of God's Word (God Incarnate) or the human word (language incarnate). Will's account of his experiences--lessons--provides the medium for the reader's pilgrimage, just as the dream experiences themselves provide Will with a text of sorts. In this sense, the reader, too, may learn from example, as Dante notes in Paradiso: "Trasumanar significar per verba / non si poria; però l'essemplo basti / a cui esperienza grazia serba" (I.70-71).[6]

The lessons comprise various reiterations of Holi Chirche's initial anti-carnal directive. For example, the theme of gluttony is continued in Passus II, after Holi

Chirche has left Will asleep and dreaming of Lady Mede; here, carnal overindulgence--in food and drink--is associated with Fals, Favel, Leccherie, and Coveitise:

> Glotonye he gaf hem ek and grete othes togidere,
> And al day to drynken at diverse tavernes,
> And there to jangle and jape and jugge hir evencristen,
> And in fastynge dayes to frete er ful tyme were.
> And thanne to sitten and soupen til sleep hem assaile,
> And breden as burgh swyn, and bedden hem esily,
> Til Sleuthe and sleep sliken hise sydes. (93-99)

The connection to Holi Chirche's discourse on carnality is strengthened by the dreamer's comment that Favel sits "on a flaterere feitsily atired" (166), reiterating the carnality of attire in addition to food and drink--the "three thynges" to be supplied to the faithful provided that "mesure" be observed.

Moreover, the description "feitsly atired" calls attention to the crucial link between text and texuere: the text is woven as is cloth, and both may be woven in excess. The text's treatment of attire works not only in conjunction with the Pauline metaphor of carnality through proscription of excessive worldly goods, but also as a means of exploring textuality. The label "text," deriving from texuere (to weave), calls attention to its own inhering web of components, aligning the text of the written word, the incarnation of language, with the image/figure of integration and intermeshing. As such,

then, the words of the text are like the threads that construct the fabric from which clothing is made; the text is a construct, a fabrication. And, like the threads of the fabric, the words of the text may, if too intricate, become garbled, and, if too simple, fall apart.

Hence the poem's references to attire as covering: they serve as subtle reminders throughout that one is indeed dealing with a complex web of words, and they provide a crucial link between the poem's own critical consciousness and attention to poetic process, and the thematic treatment of theological directives. Thus Will begins his account by noting that "[he] shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were" (2); of the "fair feeld ful of folk," Will notes, "somme putten hem to pride, apparailed hem therafer, / In contenaunce of clothynge comen disgised" (23-4), and Holi Chirche is intially described as, "A lovely lady of leere in lynnen yclothed" (3), setting a context of covering, veiling. Moreover, the Prologue provides a crucial synthesis of letter and veil: "Qualia vis metere, talia grana sere: / Si ius nudatur, nudo de iure metatur; / Si seritur pietas, de pietate metas" (136-38). Here as well, "metatur" emphasizes balance and moderation as "Nudum ius" calls attention to the relationship between un-covering and understanding.

However, excessive delight in textus--be it a fabric of threads or a fabric of words--is thus a carnal

indulgence, limiting the potential of the improper, the metaphora, by veiling it with the proper, the "correct" facade. Moreover, the emphasis made on veiling suggests not only that clothing covers potential falsehood, but also that the text itself hides--or veils--its own inhering duplicity. In other words, the surface of the words, like the surface of the garment, is immediately pleasing, immediately accessible; however, the surfaces of both text and garment are covers, veils, and that which is hidden remains to be seen.

In this sense, the poem evokes the apocalyptic revelare, to unhide, to reveal, to uncover; that which is covered must be both un-covered and re-covered through hermeneutic process. By removing the existing veil and replacing it with another, one finds meaning even as she participates in the formation of that meaning.[7] The reader of the text lifts the surface to find that which is beneath, yet, simultaneously, he re-covers the text in a veil of his own reading as he seeks meaning. And, although imagery of "veiling" is a fairly common medieval metaphor of truth-seeking, owing to its Biblical origin in St. Paul's contrasting the "letter of the Old Testament" with the "spirit of the New,"[8] Langland uses the metaphor not only for its theological connotations deriving from the Pauline metaphor but also as a means of calling

attention to the multiplicity of language, i.e., surface and depth.

Hence Langland's insistence that his reader first pay close attention to the surface of words: by insisting (through unexpected combinations and idiosyncratic usages of words) that the reader pay attention to the surface, the poet ensures that the text is both covered and re-covered, since words signify on the surface, yet they are themselves only images or representations; they signify meaning, but are not of themselves meaning unless actively processed. Textuality ensures that words mean more than their surfaces, even as one must approach that meaning through the surface first; words indicate possibilities far beyond their immediate sense, to possibilities that must be un-covered by interpretive re-covering. Hence words connote a dual of the open and the hidden, the manifest and the latent, a relationship expressed through duality: Old Testament and New, carnal and spiritual, visible and invisible, surface and depth, literal and figurative.[9] The connotations of the dual--that is, meaning derived from the comparison, or "mesure" of items--are uncovered only through interpretive acts.

Hence Piers Plowman's insistence on avoiding abuses/excesses of language: the glutton who abuses to excess food, drink, and clothing may be likened to the

glutton who abuses to excess language, i.e., one who wastes words carnally. In other words, the text's metaphors of excess underscore Holi Chirche's theological and epistemological directive, "mesure is medicine." By calling attention to excessive indulgence in worldly goods, the text likewise calls attention to excesses, or abuses, of language. Abused language is excessive; it is used self-indulgently, and, as such, it cannot be anything but excessive, because the privatization of signification results in a personal unisemy which excludes other-ness. Such language means only to the person who has appropriated it, its use is excessive and no other derives meaning from it. As Shoaf notes, "Indeed, the process of Piers Plowman can be thought of as Langland's continual attempt to escape the preclusive privacy that always threatens to deform poetry" (YLS 132), as Langland clearly recognizes the threat of sterility in the wholly private word.

Hence the paradox of propriety in language: to use language properly--and only properly--is to indulge in carnal excess, because the insistence on propriety excludes the impropriety of metaphor and thus of figurative meaning. Thus rigid constraint is a form of excess, an excess which leads to deprivation in a spiritual sense. Carnal excess entails an excess of

deprivation, an overindulgence in limitation, a surfeit of paucity. The carnal reader abuses language by insisting on limitation; he carnalizes the non-carnal by denying the potential impropriety of the proper. As such, then, he fails to recognize that interpretation disciplines--i.e., it tempers or moderates--textuality without carnalizing it.

Will is thus instructed by Repentaunce (V) to avoid carnality with regard to drink, owing to the potential link between excessive drink and excessive speech:

> "Now repente thee," quod Repentaunce, "and reherce thow nevere
> Counseil that thow knowest, by contenaunce ne by speche;
> And drynk nat over delicatly, ne to depe neither,
> That thi wille by cause therof to wrathe myghte turne.
> Esto sobrius!" he seide, and assoiled me after,
> And bad me wilne to wepe my wikkednesse to amende. (180-85)

Repentaunce's point is further reiterated when he notes to Gloton, "As thow with wordes and werkes hast wroght yvele in thi lyve, / Shryve thee and be shamed therof, and shewe it with thi mouthe" (365-66). Gloton's sin, or vice, primarily is that of waste, for he has "unjustly encroached on the needs of others by flouting 'mesure'. . . taking more than what he needs (or can even retain) of what God gave 'in commune' to all" (Stokes 172). Sleuthe is likewise guilty of carnal excess, noting, "That I telle with my tonge is two myle fro myn

herte" (402); Sleuthe's offence, much like Gloton's, is "essentially an offence against the justice that gives to all their due, that pays its debts, and observes the principle of fair 'measure'" (Stokes 172).

It is important here to note that both Gloton and Sleuthe call attention to their tongues while describing their sins of excess. The tongue/mouth is the locus of the problematic of excess: it is the point of intake for excesses of food and drink, and it is a vehicle for excesses of words, language; moreover, overindulgence in drink increases the likelihood of overindulgence in language, for the drunk man is less careful, less prudent, about how much he says and about what subject he chooses to speak. Gloton's response underscores this crucial connection between carnality and language:

> "I, Gloton," quod the gome, "gilty me yelde--
> That I have trespased with my tonge, I kan noght telle how ofte
> Sworen "Goddes soule and his sydes!" and "So helpe me God and halidome!"
> Ther no nede was nyne hyndred tymes;
> And overseyen me at my soper and som tyme at Nones. (368-72)

Gloton's admission that he has "trespased with [his] tonge" sets up an ambiguous and important parallelism of food/drink and language; just as he overstuffs himself with food and drink at supper, so, too, does he overstuff himself with his own words. The carnal abuser of sustenance is, likewise, a carnal abuser of language; the

former promotes the latter, and both are abused to excess, i.e., wasted.

The image of mouth and tongue here evokes Augustine's commentary on the circumcision of his lips and the sacrifice of his tongue ("From all temerity and all lying circumcise my lips . . . both my interior and exterior lips. . . ." and "May I sacrifice to you the service of my thought and my tongue, and may you grant what I offer up to you, I who am an indigent pauper"). As Eugene Vance comments,

> This metaphor is instructive for several reasons, among them, as we shall see, that it compels reflection about metaphor itself, which Augustine--again in his DDC (II.x.15)--defines as a kind of sign where "things that we signify by proper terms are usurped by others signifying something else." Thus, a spiritual metaphor is a usurpation and transformation of what is carnal or "literal." (6)

The oral images of Piers Plowman evoke Augustine's concern with the role of the oral organs in spiritual metaphor; for Augustine, the mouth is a crucial component in the spritual metaphor of usurpative signification, and, as such, calls attention to the necessity of avoiding carnality and carnal excess.

Hence Hunger--the desire for sustenance--advises Piers in VI, "Lat noght Sire Surfet sitten at thi borde-- / Love hym noght, for he is lecherous and likerous of tonge" (265-66) in response to Piers' request, ". . . and

ye konne / Any leef of lechecraft, lere it me, my deere" (253-54). The connection between carnal over-indulgence and wasted speech is reiterated in IX, where moderation is again advocated:

> "Tynynge of tyme, Truthe woot the sothe,
> Is moost yhated upon erthe of hem that ben in hevene;
> And siththe to spille speche, that spire is of grace,
> And Goddes gleman and a game of hevene.
> Wolde nevere the feithful fader his fithele were untempred,
> Ne his gleman a gedelyng, a goere to tavernes." (99-104)

Here, Langland calls attention to both the possibility of wasted speech and, more important in the context of the poem's concern with its own speech, his apprehension or, indeed, fear of such waste; yet poetry is contingent upon the very multiplicity that could easily become excessive. Of course, that is a chance that the poet must take, since he must risk wasting his words if he is to use them at all. Even as speech is a "game of hevene," however, it might be wasted by carnality. This is reiterated in X, with the careful distinction that while man's word is subject to the constraints of mesure, God's is not: "For Goddes word wolde noght be lost--for that wercheth evere" (269).

Piers calls attention to wasted speech (XVI), noting the relationship between carnality and excess:

> "The flessh is a fel wynd, and in flouryng tyme,
> Thorugh likynge and lustes so loude he gynneth blowe
> That it norisseth nyce sightes and som tyme wordes,
> And wikkede werkes therof, wormes of synne,

> And forbiteth the blosmes right to the bare leves." (31-5)

Here, Piers links together carnal images ("flessh," "likynge," "lustes") with the insufficient--and thus wasted--results of carnality ("nyce . . . wordes," "wikkede werkes," "synne"). Carnality produces profits of sort, but they are largely worthless or undesirable; the fruits of carnal indulgence are spiritually lacking, even as they appear pleasing or profitable. Will thus grapples with the concept of moderation, seeking to understand its necessity while not fully grasping its significance with regard to spirituality.

Indeed, near the conclusion of the poem, Will is still asking for direction, and receives a version of "mesure is medicine" as his answer:

> "Counseille me, Kynde," quod I, "what craft be best to lerne?"
> "Lerne to love," quod Kynde, "and leef alle othere."
> "How shal I come to catel so, to clothe me and to feede?"
> "And thow love lelly, lakke shal thee nevere
> Weede ne worldly mete, while thi lif lasteth." (207-11)

From Will's rather redundant question, it might seem as though he has failed to learn from his dream-experiences. The question here is similar to the dialogue of I, where Will seeks answers to spiritual questions yet concerns himself with carnal interests. Edmund Reiss argues,

> At the end of Piers Plowman, the narrator, Will, still searching for Truth, is in a real sense no closer to it than he was at the outset when he asked

> Holy Church for instruction about Truth and Falsehood. . . . Falsehood and Fable (that is, Deception), together with their many companions, are so much the way of this world that the narrator is unable to be free of them. . . . [T]he emphasis is not on success but on frustration, waste, even failure. (119)

But this failure ultimately promotes success because of the text's emphasis on the relationship between wasted language and carnality. Because Will cannot yet make sense of his dream-experiences within the dream-frames or even within the brief moments of awakening, he does not end his text with explicit success, for he has not yet found what he has professed to seek; however, he is given the means of finding the Truth which he seeks, provided that he learn to become a non-carnal, usurpative reader, finding meaning not "in [his] cors," but within the polysemy of metaphor.

The theological and epistemological connotations of Holi Chirche's "mesure" directive converge in the metaphor of metaphor, the "mesure" of "mesure." Metaphor, Piers Plowman affirms, is contingent upon comparison; hence the text is rife with metaphoric collocations, which call attention not only to the direct metaphor per se, but also the inhering metaphor of metaphoricity itself. In passus I, Holy Chirche attempts to instruct Will metaphorically--by comparison--by setting up a series of collocations using Biblical synonynms for the name of Christ--mediator, physician, truth, word--and, by doing so, demonstrates the

necessity of figurative language in scriptural interpretation. Just as "Mesure is medicine," so, too, "love is triacle of hevene" and "Love is leche of lif"; "love," like "mesure," is a healing remedy or an agent thereof, and, by extension, "love" may be likened to "mesure"--"love" and "mesure" function similarly as healing agents or remedies, and, as such, may be equated and their meanings thus transferred. The copula "is," which joins together "mesure" and "medicine," also emphasizes the instrumentality of language in terms of mediation; the copula mediates the various senses of the words (their polysemy) by aligning, comparing, and usurping meaning.

Holi Chirche emphasizes the necessity of mediation as she defines "Truthe" in terms of "love":

> Forthi is love ledere of the Lordes folk of hevene,
> And a meene, as the mair is, [inmiddes] the kyng and the commune;
> Right so is love a ledere and the lawe shapeth:
> Upon man for hise mysdedes the mercyment he taxeth. (159-162)

Holi Chirche notes that just as the mayor mediates or transacts exchanges between king and commmoner, so, too, does love mediate or transact exchanges between God and man; love, as mediator, is also a leader who shapes the law, imposing the appropriate fines for misdeeds after determining--measuring--what is owed by whom. "Love" mediates between God and man just as the love of God

manifest in his Son does: "For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2. 5). Christ the mediator is Christ the Word--"is" is usurpative even here: figurative language, or metaphoricity, is a necessary agent on the search, or quest, for Truth, or salvation.

In its immediate context, then, Holi Chirche's use of "meene" calls attention to the problematic of truthfulness in language, while insisting upon the necessity of metaphoricity transacted by some mediator. The problem of defining "truthfulness" and of finding it concerns much of text and, indeed, is a unifying theme: "Piers Plowman, at times, seems almost an allegory of the impossibility of discovering either significance or truth within language, whether one searches for divine or merely for human significance" (Finke 57). But, as Holi Chirche suggests, mediation can provide direction, though without certainty; it is through mediation that language comes to mean, for verbal signs are themselves both mediated and mediating. Thus collocation allows for a crucial interplay between signs.

But the potential for duplicity/falseness in this interplay is a constant threat, for mediation entails a degree of ambiguity and choice--and thus error. In Passus III, for example, Conscience links together falseness,

mediation, and carnality in his angry denial of Mede:

> For she is frele of hire feith, fikel of hire speche,
> And maketh men mysdo many score tymes.
> In trust of hire tresor she teneth ful manye:
> Wyves and widewes wantounnesse she techeth,
>
> And lereth hem lecherie that loveth hire yiftes.
> Youre fader she felled thorugh false biheste,
> And hath apoisoned popes and peired Holy Chirche.
> Is noght a bettre baude, by Hym that me made,
> Bitwene hevene and helle, in erthe though men soghte!
> For she is tikel of hire tail, talewis of
> tonge. . . . (122-31)

The language used by Conscience to describe Mede provides crucial textual connectives for mediation and duplicity; here, he not only links together--mediates--Mede's own mediation with her falseness, but also mediation and duplicity in language. Mede, Conscience notes, is "fikel of hire speche," for her words are enticing but at a price: through her "false biheste," she promises more than she ever gives, tempting the greedily unwary--the carnally indulgent--into her web of falseness. In short, Mede uses language duplicitously, professing to signify one truth while deceitfully privileging another. Mede's duplicity calls attention to the duplicity inhering in any mediation, especially with regard to language. Any joining of items carries with it the potential taint of corrupted instrumentality, for the instrumentality of a mediator derives from both motivation and medium. Thus Mede mediates with duplicitous language, bringing together

willing victim and his misdoings; the deception resides in the apparent slipperiness of her words.

Of course, Mede is successful because she mediates for those carnally predisposed to seduction; her victims--co-conspirators, really--are willing to accept her words because they want what they believe those words to signify.[10] That is, the carnally excessive--the gluttonous--are eager to accept the fickle words of Mede because they wish to believe those words; Mede is herself governed in part by carnality, for she is "talewis of tonge," excessive and wasteful in her language and, moreover, using that very excess to lead others into excess. Mede seduces those who wish to be seduced, even as such seduction leads them away from spirituality, and further into carnality. As such, then, Conscience aptly describes Mede as the best mediator between heaven and hell.

In addition, Mede has "peired Holy Chirche" through "false biheste," thereby attacking Holy Chirche with the very carnality that Holy Chirche warns against. Thus Mede is a temptation that must be resisted if carnality is to be avoided. But Mede also provides a crucial "mesure" for Holi Chirche, in that Mede's seductiveness balances Holi Chirche's pedantry and offers a choice; in other words, the temptation of Mede ensures that those who seek spirituality according to the carnal constraints advocated

by Holy Chirche do so by choice rather than default. Without Mede and the temptations that she represents, sprituality would lose its counterpoint, carnality: in theological terms, the balance of choices would be upset, thereby precluding free will; in epistemological terms, the balance of contraries would be lost, rendering figurative definition inadequate.

Moreover, Mede's mediation calls attention to the theological connotations of "mesure," for mede/Mede it/herself is polysemous. As Adams notes,

> Langland appears to distinguish salvation from earthly bribery (both of which are rewards or medes) solely on the basis of mesure or lack of mesure. In making God's mede correlative to one's deeds. . .and in characterizing earthly mede as mesureless, Langland is implying that beatitude is unlike bribery. . . . [God's] mede is unique precisely in its mesure, its lack of the randomness that characterizes Lady Meed's gifts. ("Mede" 97)

God's "mede" thus contrasts with the Mede described by Conscience, for earthly Mede falls short when compared to--measured against--God's. The polysemy of "mede," then, is contingent upon the metaphoricity of "mesure," and both are as crucial to Langland's theology are they are to his poetry.[11]

But an even more crucial use of "mesure" informs the text in both theological and poetic terms, for the comparative, i.e., metaphoric or non-carnal, angle of "mesure" governs a recurring alignment, described

throughout the text, pertaining to image theology. If, indeed, "[t]he restoration of the divine image in history and in the individual soul is the unifying theme of Piers Plowman" (Goldsmith 25), then the polysemous connotations of Holi Chirche's "mesure" directive provide a means of reading Piers Plowman's quest for the restoration of that image. In other words, the text's evocations of image theology provide a context for understanding "mesure" just as "mesure" provides an interpretive frame for those evocations. The imago Dei is suggested in Passus I, where Holi Chirche notes:

> Who is trewe of his tonge and telleth noon oother,
> And dooth the werkes therwith and wilneth no man ille,
> He is a god by the Gospel, agrounde and olofte,
> And ylik to Oure Lord, by Seint Lukes wordes. (88-91)

Here, Holi Chirche reminds Will that the Gospel reiterates the doctrine of creation of man in God's image and, by adhering to His instructions, man may restore in part pre-lapsarian similitude; he may become "ylik Oure Lord."[12] Holi Chirche affirms the gospel sentiment that he who follows God's will abides in God. By the gospel, Holi Chirche notes, the man who respects God's Truth and is true of his tongue is like God; he restores, in part, the pre-lapsarian similitude of God and man. Her assertion is further reiterated by Repentaunce, who prays, "God that of thy goodness gavest the world being,/ And of nothing madest everything, and man most like thyself" (480-81),

and who also notes the scriptural source, "Who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him" (I John 4.16).

Without this Truth, Holi Chirche implies, man is the carnal image of God, for the divine similitude is forfeited at the Fall, leaving only an image of divinity that is constrained by carnal desires. In other words, the carnal man retains God's image--as do all men--but only the spiritual man participates in a relationship of similitude. In becoming "ylik to oure Lord," the spiritual man transcends carnality. Her words are echoed by Thought in VIII, describing where Dowel dwells:

> Whoso is trewe of his tunge and of his two handes,
> And thorugh his labour or thorugh his land his liflode wynneth,
> And is trusty of his tailende, taketh but his owene,
> And is noght dronkelewe ne dedeynous--Dowel hym folweth. (81-84)

Holi Chirche's evocation of image theology is best understood, perhaps, in an Augustinian context, who notes, "when we learn to know God, we become new men in the image of our Creator" (332). Here, Augustine asserts that man becomes like God when he learns to know God, i.e., when he "can see and understand [His] truth" (332). As Colish notes,

> We can know God as he is only if we become like him, [Augustine] says; as we can become like him only by knowing him. This appears to be a tautology, but, for Augustine, it is instead a dynamic opportunity, an opportunity which God makes possible by incorporating man into the life of the Trinity through the gift of the Holy Spirit. (54)

Thus the man who understands God's truth becomes like him, while the man who resists or fails to comprehend it remains carnal.

The prayer of Repentaunce (V) likewise asserts creation doctrine:

> "Now God," quod he, "that of Thi goodnesse gonne the world make,
> And of naught madest aught and man moost lik to thiselve,
> And sithen suffredest hym to synne, a siknesse to us alle--
> and al for the beste, as I bileve, whatevere the Book telleth. . . .
> Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram; Et alibi,
> Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo."
> (481-87)

Here, Repentaunce cites the Biblical "image and likeness" creation narrative, i.e., the original state of creation. Moreover, Repentaunce notes, "Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis," linking together creation doctrine with the Word Incarnate.

Wit affirms at length the doctrine of creation of man in God's image (IX), paying close attention to the distinction between image and likeness:

> "Kynde," quod Wit, "is creatour of alle kynnes thynges,
> Fader and formour of al that evere was maked--
> And that is the grete God that gynnyng hadde nevere,
> Lord of lif and of light, of lisse and of peyne.
> Aungeles and alle thyng arn at his wille,
> Ac man is moost lik of marc and shape.
> For thorugh the word that he [warp] woxen forth beestes:
> Dixit et facta sunt.
> Ac he made man moost lik to hymself,

> and Eve of his ryb bon withouten any mene.
> For he was synguler hymself and seide Faciamus--
> As who seith, "Moore moot herto than my word oone:
> My myght moost helpe now with my speche." (26-37)

However, while Wit carefully notes the existence of image ("marc"), he avoids claiming likeness, concentrating instead only on appearance. In addition, Wit cites the Bible only as far as image--"Faciamus hominem ad imaginem nostram"--and carefully stops short of "et similitudem."

Through this crucial omission, Wit seems to emphazise that man, as a being created in God's image but having forfeited the likeness in the Fall, is an image without likeness, as if he were a mirror image of God: he has likeness but not similitude, i.e., similitude in the sense of equality or parity. In other words, there is a semblance of similitude, a similitude of sorts, but not similitude in the sense of parity. Along these lines, with regard to mirror images, Augustine notes,

> Where there is an image, there is similitude but not equality . . . as in a mirror, there is the image of a man because it is expressed from him; and it is also necessarily a similitude; nevertheless, there is no equality because many things are lacking in the image which nevertheless are in the thing from which it is expressed. And where there is equality, there is similitude but no image. (Cited by Shoaf, Currency of Word 19)

Augustine's description seems to inform--or at least to enlighten--Wit's insistence on image and avoidance of likeness.

Moreover, the emphasis on image is reiterated throughout the text as a given, while likeness is acknowledged within a context of theological doctrine that links together creation and restoration (i.e., god by the gospel). In this sense, the text calls attention to image theology not only in its sense of creation doctrine, but also in the relationship between man and God as man seeks to become more like God.[13] As such, man's relationship with God--his role as image--may be likened to mirroring. As Julia Kristeva argues,

> Consider this mirrorlike motion: my desire will be fulfilled through Him, for He has fulfilled his own by creating me in his image. . . . Let me recall, in this connection, a hardly orthodox but highly significant expression of jubilatory identification of the lover with his God, in a prayer that has been attributed to Augustine: "O Lord, if I were God and you Augustine, I would rather that you be God and I Augustine." (160)

Man thus "mirrors" God, created in his image and seeking to become more like him through execution of gospel sentiment.[14]

The text's evocations of image-creation doctrine are further emphasized by the text's own textuality; that is, the mode of allegory used to elucidate theological doctrine calls attention to its own creation, image, and likeness. Obviously, personification is an incarnating of the abstract; Repentaunce, Wit, and the like are, as textual incarnations of the abstracts signified by their names, signifiers of images and imaging, of both

signifieds and the process of signifying for. Augustine argues that allegory exists in order that "by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual" (10); the use of this transfer of meaning from the corporal to the spiritual calls attention to the need for such transfer. In other words, allegory calls attention to itself as a mirroring of some truth that cannot be signified otherwise. Laurie Finke comments:

> Allegory, as it tries to incarnate the absent signified that would authorize meaning and truth, testifies to their absence. The more language seeks to clarify (literally to illuminate or free from darkness or gloom) meaning, the more it reveals the void, the darkness of its own reflexivity. (57)

The allegorical personifications in the text, then, underscore the textualizing of "image" and the frustration of attempting to signify "likeness."

But mirroring provides an important metaphor for coming to understand God and, by extension, the metaphor itself. Mirroring provides a rhetoric not only of discovery, but, more important, of self-discovery; through a process of self-reflection, one might come to understand oneself and one's place within the larger scheme of creation:

> Though creation is a dark glass, it is, nevertheless, a glass: something through which we can see. Man is invited, in medieval Christian thought, to taste and to see, to compare, to evaluate, to read, to interpret, and then to grow toward understanding. (Jeffery 6)

Although creation carries within it the potential snares

of carnal enticement, creation also offers the means of salvation, in that man can choose to mirror God--to become like God--just as he may choose to indulge in carnality at the expense of spirituality. In short, he may choose his own path and deal with the consequences of his decision-making, or choice.

But choosing is not an easy task, for mirroring in the sense of comparing, is complicated by plurality. As Wit notes, God's image is Gods' image; "God" the singular creator speaks in first-person plural, further confusing man's attempts to understand him. Wit's observation seems to parallel Augustine's obvious concern with plurality:

> Again, you do not say "Let man be made" but Let us make man. You do not say "Let us make him according to his kind" but Wearing our own image and likeness . . . you teach him to see the Trinity of Unity or the Unity of Trinity. It is because you are the Trinity that you speak in the plural when you say Let us make man; yet in the next verse, which says God made man, the singular is used; and the phrase: Wearing our own image and likeness, in which the plural is used, is followed by the words in his own image, where you speak in the singular. (Conf.13.22)

Augustine accepts the paradoxical person shifts with a recognition of unity in plurality and vice versa; the triune God is both singular and plural, and hence may be understood only in polysemous terms--he cannot be reduced to singularity, even as his plurality engages, and indeed perplexes, the mind with its paradoxical complexity.

Wit emphasizes the plurality of God in creation doctrine, implicitly calling attention to polysemy as well:

> "Muche wo woth that man that mysruleth his Inwit,
> And that ben glotons glubberes--hir God is hire wombe:
> Quorum Deus venter est.
> For thei serven Sathan, hir soules shal he have:
> That lyven synful lif here, hir soule is lich the devel.
> And alle that lyven good lif are lik to God almyghty:
> Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet &c.
> Allas! that drynke shal fordo that God deere boughte,
> And dooth God forsaken hem that he shoop to his liknesse. (60-66)

Wit underscores the relationship between text and fabric with "shoop," for here he uses it in the sense of creating, while initially Will uses it to note his change in attire; hence he reiterates the importance of covering/uncovering with regard to spiritual learning. In addition, Wit plays on the distinction between image and likeness, arguing that the carnal sinners' souls are "lich the devel," for while the sinner retains God's image, his soul acquires the likeness of the devil; the parody is further strengthened by his use of synonynm--"Sathan" and "devel"--which creates an illusion of plurality. His follow-up comment, "I fynde that Holy Chirche / Sholde fynden hem that hem fauten," further connects his explication of creation doctrine with the text's continuing commentary on carnality.

But if one is to know God one must first come to know himself; one cannot learn to appreciate God if one is hidden from himself. Indeed,

> It is the belief of both Ambrose and Augustine that in "unveiling" the words of prophecy they are coming closer to Christ; the revelation of God is not merely something to be learnt about, but something to take into oneself, so that to reveal Truth . . . is at the same time to reveal the god-likeness in oneself. (Goldsmith 33)

Hence Augustine's conversion may be described in terms of self-knowing, for Augustine's experience is a revelation, an un-covering of the self to the self. Augustine finds, after wandering--erring--the inner sense of self that has eluded him throughout his frustrating and unsuccessful carnal exploits. Like the prodigal son, Augustine returns to himself, renewed and re-covered.[15] Spiritual conversion, then, necessarily entails an imaging, or mirroring, with the self before the self can mirror God.[16]

The treatment of image theology and its implications of self-reflection is, in Piers Plowman, given an interesting twist by a governing image described in the Prologue: the mirror of Narcissus. The implications of image theology are combined and in conflict with an underlying connection with Narcissus. At the opening of the Prologue, the soon-to-be dreamer finds himself by a brook, the sound of which lulls him to sleep:

> Ac on a May morwenynge on Malverne hilles
> Me bifel a ferly, of Fairye me thoghte.
> I was wery forwandred and wente me to reste

> Under a brood bank by a bourne syde;
> And as I lay and lenede and loked on the watres,
> I slombred into a slepyng, it sweyed so murye. (5-10)

Just as Ovid's Narcissus[17] is enthralled by the image that he sees in the water, so, too, is Langland's dreamer enticed. Whatever he sees in the water is sufficient enough to hold his attention and, indeed, to initiate the subsequent dream vision(s).

Because the text is in part governed by the opening Narcissus image, the text may itself be seen as an image; it is the image seen by the dreamer in the mirror of his mind, his own mirror of Narcissus, and it is further conveyed textually to an audience who, in turn, "sees" Will's vision in its own various minds. In other words, as Will looks into the water, falls asleep, and begins dreaming, his dreams are images in his mind, images in which his own image appears; he dreams of himself, and conveys his own image within the text comprising multiple images. Thus this image of dreamer-Will at the water may be seen/read as a narcissistic moment that informs the entire text, creating a contextual framework linked together by instances of images, mirroring, and, ultimately, comparison, for just as Will sees himself in the narcissistic moments of his dream episodes, so, too, do the dreams themselves call attention to narcissism in the sense of paradoxical pairs of _res_ and _imago_.

An important link between image theology and Narcissus is provided in XV, where Will cryptically likens himself to Christ in the context of mirroring:

> I seigh nevere swich a man, so me God helpe,
> That he ne wolde aske after his, and outherwhile coveite
> Thyng that neded hum noght--and nyme it, if he myghte!
> "Clerkes kenne that Crist is in alle places;
> Ac I seigh hym nevere soothly but as myself in a mirour:
> Hic in enigmate, tunc facie ad faciem.
> And so I trowe trewely, by that men telleth of charite.
> It is noght chaumpions fight, ne chaffare, as I trowe."
> (158-164)

Here, Will aligns himself with Christ as res and imago, i.e., he sees Christ as himself in a mirror; the mirror image of Will is perceived by Will as Christ, and, by extension, the source of the expressed image, Will, may be likened to the image it expresses, Christ. In other words, through res and imago, self and image, Will experiences a narcissistic moment where Christ is an expression of himself; Christ is he, but he is not Christ.

In this mirror of Narcissus, Will sees in his own image the otherness which he desires; seeking salvation through Christ, Will experiences at the mirror the fulfillment of a desire, or at least the promise of such fulfillment, since he gives little indication of learning anything from what he has seen. The parallel that he draws between himself and Christ, however, indicates that

he understands image theology to the extent that he recognizes that he and Christ share a relationship of image, though he seems to reverse source and image in his own perception and sees instead Christ as an image of himself rather than himself as an image of Christ.

Implicitly, Will also sees God in himself, for, as Clergy notes to him earlier in X, in a context of creation doctrine and divine plurality,

> Thre propre persones, ac noght in plurel nombre,
> For al is but oon God and ech is God hymselve:
> Deus Pater, Deus Filius, Deus Spiritus Sanctus--
> God the Fader, God the Sone, God Holy Goost of bothe,
> Maker of mankynde and of animales bothe.
> "Austyn the olde herof made bokes,
> And hymself ordeyened to sadde us in bileve.
> Who was his auctour? Alle the foure Evaungelistes;
> And Crist cleped hymself so, the same bereth witnesse:
> Ego in patre et pater in me est; et qui videt me videt et patrem meum. (237-244)

Will, in seeing Christ, has seen God, both as expressions--images--of himself. Will, as Narcissus, sees his own image as that which he desires; this desire is, of course, not lust (concupiscentia), but a desire for spiritual transcendence (i.e., Christian narcissism). Will's interest in salvation prompts his vision, for he finds within his image that which he has not yet found without.

Will's narcissistic moment is prefigured (and that prefigurement itself is narcissistic) in XI, where Fortune offers Will the opportunity to look into "a mirour that

highte Middelerthe," and to see what he wishes:

> Sithen she seide to me, "Here myghtow se wondres,
> And knowe that thow coveitest, and come therto,
> peraunter."
> Thanne hadde Fortune folwynge hire two faire
> damyseles:
> Concupiscencia Carnis men called the elder mayde,
> And Coveitise of Eighes ycalled was that oother.
> (10-14)

Here, Fortune suggests that by looking into the mirror, Will might find that which he covets; he might find that which he seeks. Or, more likely, he might decide that what he sees in the mirror is that which he really desires; his desires might be incited by that which he sees. Hence Fortune's daughters:

> Concupiscentia-Carnis colled me aboute the nekke
> And seide, "Thow aret yong and yeep and hast yeres
> ynoew
> For to lyve longe and ladies to lovye;
> And in this mirour thow might se myrthes ful manye
> That leden thee wole to likynge al thi lif tyme."
> The secounde seide the same: "I shal sewe thi
> wille . . ." (17-22)

The temptation to find in the mirror that which he desires has an obvious emphasis on sensual/sexual delights; this temptation offers the sensual allurement of Narcissus's mirror: to see the object of one's desire as an expression of one's self. The mirror of Middle Earth offers the enticement of having one's desires fulfilled as one wishes them to be, to have one's desires fulfilled by an object of desire created by that very desire itself--that is, as

a projection of one's desires that becomes not only the object of desire but its fulfillment as well.

As such, then, it supplies a parody of likeness and image, for, as Daniel Murtaugh suggests, "Instead of a Speculum Historiale or a Speculum Charitatis it is a Speculum Hujus Mundi" (76). The mirroring here concerns man's cupidity rather than God's creation; in other words, the carnal world mirrors the carnal man to the apparent exclusion of the higher, spiritual world. The mirroring here provides expressions which derive not from God but rather from man's own desires; as such, man fails to convey God's image. Moreover, the polysemy of "likyng" in Fortune's invitation provides an ironic commentary on Will's apparent ignorance:

> Although one would expect to se one's "likeness" . . . in a mirror, Fortune clearly means to promise him his "pleasure." The word "lykyng" in this context evokes both these meanings as well as a third, the "likeness" of God in which Will is made. (Davlin 71)

Thus Will, who has already been accused by Scripture of failing to know himself--i.e., to self-reflect--here is confounded further by Fortune's deliberate confusing of connotations.

Will, of course, does not succumb to the carnal temptations of Concupiscientia Carnis and Coveitise of Eighes, though the vices that they represent provide a recurring threat throughout Will's journey/text. Instead, he is counselled here by the anonymous voice who, in

reiterating the advice of Holi Chirche, reminds Will of the crucial connection between "mesure" and salvation:

> Bothe logyk and lawe, that loveth noght to lye,
> I conseille alle Cristene, clyve noght theron to soore,
> For some wordes I fynde writen, were of Feithes techyng,
> That saved synful men, as Seint Johan bereth witnesse:
> Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis.
> (223-7)

Thematically, the speaker here reaffirms the crucial role of "mesure" in spiritual salvation, reminding Will that balance and moderation not only are useful in avoiding sin, but also that there is give-and-take involved, that one finds one's own efforts returned in kind.

More important, in terms of the poetic process itself, the affirmation of "mesure" again calls attention to the crucial role of "mesure" in metaphoricity within and without the theological context. When Will is "fet forth by ensaumples to knowe" by Kynde, the examples are experienced in simultaneous pairs, or duals, calling attention to the role of comparison in metaphoricity:

> Man and his make I myghte se bothe;
> Poverte and plentee, bothe pees and werre,
> Blisse and bale--bothe I seigh at ones,
> And how men token Mede and Mercy refused.
> Reson I seigh soothly seren alle beestes
> In etynge, in drynkynge and in engendrynge of kynde.
> (330-335)

It is, perhaps, important to note here that Reson follows the beasts but not man; when confronted on this point by

Will, Reson first scolds Will ("Forthi I rede . . . thow rule thi tonge bettre") and then reminds Will that suffering and temptation are man's fate ("In fondynge of the flessh and of the fend bothe").

Here, too, Will comes to understand the important role of shame in salvation: that shame keeps one from straying too far. Ymaginatif evokes the experience of Adam, who responds with shame after his transgression: "the only way [Adam] could know evil was to know the good as evil; just so, his first experience after the transgression was shame, or knowledge of his good body as evil, as something to be ashamed of" (Shoaf, Currency of the Word 31). Will, too, notes that "Ther smyt no thyng so smerte, ne smelleth so foule / As shame" (432), echoing Repentaunce's insistence to Glutton, "Shrive thee and be shamed therof, and shewe it with thi mouthe" (367). Shame is, of course, rooted in narcissism, for self-reflection is necessary before one can respond to that self-perception.

In other words, by scrutinizing oneself narcissistically, one is able to gauge where the boundaries of proper behavior have been transgressed. Hence Ymaginatif--himself the essence and instrumentality of imaging and reflecting--evokes mirroring and recovering in his advice to Will:

> Nolite iudicare et non iudicabimini.
> Right so Goddes body, bretheren, but it be worthili
> taken,
> Dampneth us at the day of dome as dide the caractes
> the Jewes.
> "Forthi I counseille thee for Cristes sake, clergie
> that thow lovye,
> For kynde wit is of his kyn and neighe cosynes bothe
> To Oure Lord, leve me--forthi love hem, I rede.
> For bothe ben as mirours to amenden oure defautes,
> And lederes for lewed men and for lettred bothe.
> . . . Beati quorum remisse sunt iniquitates et quorum
> tecta sunt peccata. (89-96; 178)

In short, Ymaginatif recommends that Will self-reflect within a context of Christian humility in order that he might come to know himself and God.

The narcissistic moments in the text--in a context of image theology--also call attention to the link between desire and language. Freccero notes:

> Ever since Augustine, the Middle Ages insisted upon the link between eros and language, between the reaching out in desire for what mortals can never possess and the reaching out of language toward the significance of silence. To refuse to see in human desire an incompleteness that urges the soul on to transcendence is to remain within the realm of creatures. . . . Similarly, to refuse to see language and poetry as continual askesis, pointing beyond themselves, is to remain within the letter, treating it as an absolute devoid of the spirit which gives meaning to human discourse. (130)

The link between eros and language is illustrated by the figure of Narcissus, for Narcissus exemplifies cruces of both desire and signification. The self-other relationship called into question in a Narcissus episode exists as a problematic of desire, i.e., desiring the self which is the other and vice versa, and, more important, a

crisis of signification where boundaries of identify and definition are blurred.

Metaphor is used narcissistically by the text in the form of collocation--the items are, after all, paired with the copula "is"--but the comparison is problematic, owing to the dis-parity of items; in other words, two obviously different items are joined by the copula "is," which equates the two, yet the very existence of the two--i.e., they are not simultaneous to the point of being given the same name--denies parity. The two are not the same; the "is" joins in a complex and troubling manner, yet it is precisely that complexity that allows for usurpative reading and hence the avoidance of carnality. The copula transacts exchanges between items, but the gap between the two is transgressed, not eliminated; the two are aligned through mediation, but the crucial difference necessary for definition and polysemy remains.

The exchange inhering in metaphoric collocation is given an economic analogy throughout the text, for the mirror-like "Date et dabitur vobis" provides theological and epistemological exemplification of metaphor, demonstrating its contingency upon exchange. Indeed, the quest for salvation--the journey to Truth--comprises narcissistic moments of metaphoric collocation. Thus Holi Chirche elucidates her discourse on Truthe by explicating salvation in terms of exchange:

> Forthi I rede yow riche, haveth ruthe of the povere,
> Though ye be myghty to mote, beeth meke in youre
> werkes,
> For the same mesure that ye mete, amys outher ellis,
> Ye shulle ben weyen therwith whan ye wenden hennes:
> Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis remecietur vobis.
> (175-178)

Here, she advises that one determine what one owes in prior recognition that it will, likewise, be measured; in other words, Holi Chirche suggests that one must determine--or measure--what one owes if it is to be returned in kind. She thus prefigures the pardon of Passus XIX ("Redde quod debes"), calling attention to the necessity of assessment before payment. One must assess (i.e., measure) what is owed before it can be paid; her instructions suggest that one must "rede" what is owed to whom and why before one might obey the command "redde quod debes."

Hence she continues the explication of "mesure" with a Gospel command pertaining to exchange; just as salvation may be understood in terms of economics, so, too, does the language of salvation depend on metaphoric exchange:

> For [thise ben wordes] writen in the [Euaungelie]:
> "Date, et dabitur vobis--for I deele yow alle.
> And that is the lok of love that leteth out my grace,
> To conforten the carefulle acombred with synne."
> (200-203)

If one gives, then one will have something given in return, presumably of comparable or, as is implied, greater worth. It is an exchange not of equality, but rather of profit. She thus likens God to a love-gift when

defining Treuthe as the best of treasures tried:

> "Whan alle tresors arn tried," quod she, "Treuthe is the beste.
> I do it on Deus caritas to deme the sothe;
> It is as dereworthe a drury as deere God hymselven. (85-87)

Her comparison of God and a "drury," that is, a fin'amors love-token, calls attention to exchange, excess, and mediation; it is a usurpative comparison, or measure. Truth's value, she suggests, is contingent upon metaphoric exchange. Holi Chirche uses metaphoric collocation to transact meaning in both theological and epistemological terms, informed throughout by a governing ratio: an underlying insistence on the propriety of "mesure" and the economics of exchange. Hence the command "Date, et dabitur vobis": it reiterates the exchange inhering in any episode of figurative discourse, reiterating the relationship between economics and language as well as that between economics and salvation.

Holi Chirche's discourse, clearly deriving from the Sermon on the Mount, calls attention to the crucial connection between "mesure" and metaphoricity. She divides the biblical text for purposes of her exposition, but she never loses sight of the link between the parts:

> Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. (Lk 6.38)

Here, the command to give and to have given is clearly linked to the concept of measure and measuring; what is given and what is received are contingent upon "mesure," for comparison is the means by which value--and hence debt--is determined. The key image here is that of exchange, for exchange inscribes both the theological and epistemological implications of "mesure."

Hence the text's economic imagery: thematically, it calls attention to Christ's ransom (i.e., his payment based on his own mediation) as part of the framing theological theme of salvation, and critically, it calls attention to the poetic process of metaphor as "mesure." In terms of language, metaphoricity is exchange; "mesure" entails the exchanging of meaning, as one transfers meaning between the two compared items across the gap mediated by the copula "is," or, in Augustine's terms, as one usurps meaning from one verbal sign and transfers it to another. Just as salvation is, in theological terms, transacted by mediation, so, too, is meaning in epistemological terms. Holi Chirche's comparison calls attention to the "is" of comparison--which mediates between the compared items while insisting upon their distinction; the "is" defines the pair, but the definition is necessarily problematic owing to its multiplicity. The "is" can only measure. Mediation brings or joins together, but not in any single, stable sense; the

instrumentality of mediation inheres in the polysemy of language, even as that polysemy introduces doubt and ambiguity to the sentence of the text.

The elucidation of Holi Chirche's "mesure is medicine" directive throughout the text of Piers Plowman ultimately is thus connected to a Narcissus theme that provides a theological rhetoric of self-reflection. In spiritual terms,

> Piers Plowman is a speculum peregrinorum, a mirror for pilgrims. Where the pilgrimage is inadequate, the pilgrim . . . comes upon an inadequate goal, meeting that face to face, instead of the face of God. . . . Where the education is completed, the mirroring is true rather than false. (Holloway, Pilgrim and Book 91)

The text thus becomes a mirror in which the spiritual pilgrim may find himself; it is his own "mirror of Narcissus," where spirituality inheres in the imaging and likeness of the spiritual pilgrim and the God whom he seeks (though there is always a necessary degree of disparity), contingent upon dis-covery through re-covering or re-veiling.

Textually, poetry is necessarily narcissistic, for just as the Christian pilgrim must turn toward the self in order to measure comparison with a spiritual other,[18] so, too, must language be paired and compared if there is to be poetry. The medieval synthesis of image theology and metaphoric self-consciousness is manifest in the complex

figure of the Christian Narcissus, for Narcissus provides a rhetoric of comparison for reading the poetry as a text self-aware and critically conscious of its own metaphoric processes for, as Julia Kristeva notes, "[p]oetry belongs to Narcissus" (185). If, indeed, "[t]he sign of truth in the poem is its openness to free, full word play" (Davlin 19), then truth in language and truth in spirituality must be uncovered through mediation. In both cases, Narcissus mediates between reader and text, inviting comparison both within and without, where desire and language come together in a simultaneous moment of self-reflection and discovery.

Given the challenging complexity of Piers Plowman's language, mediation is necessary to bring together language and meaning, word and thing, reader and text. The text's running commentary on the implications of metaphoric collocation provides Will with the means of reading and understanding both language and Scripture for himself--"in [his] cors" but spiritually--demonstrating poetic processes and calling attention to simultaneous theological and epistemological consequences of signification. Perhaps, too, it provides the modern reader with a possible directive for making sense of Langland's highly idiosyncratic uses of language, so that he, too, might learn, as Holi Chirche reiterates at the end of the first passus, "by sighte of the textes" (206).

Notes

[1]See, for example, Carruthers:
The search for St. Truth is conducted in terms of a search for and an analysis of the signs that truly express him. This concern with the truthfulness of signs, analyzed in terms of verbal forms and images, is evident in the devices which the poet uses. . . . Langland is in his own way searching for a truly Christian rhetoric as urgently as Augustine did, and for much the same reason--out of a sense that rhetoric has failed and has led men away from Truth rather than toward him. (19)

[2]Augustine notes,
as the soul should be ruled by God, so the body should be ruled by the soul, but the soul's relation to the body should be "mastery, not contempt." In right order there is no suggestion of repression: "the flesh, then, is not our enemy; when its vices are resisted, it itself is loved because it is cared for." (Miles 65)
See also Robinson, who discusses Pauline theology's treatment of the body in relation to spirit, especially 11-33.

[3]The medieval epistemology by contraries, or contrast, is perhaps best articulated by Jean de Meun in the Roman de la Rose:
Ainsinc va des contreres choses,
les unes sunt des autres gloses;
et qui l'une an veust definit,
de l'autre li doit souvenir,
ou ja, par nule antancion,
n'i metra diffinicion;
car qui des .II. n'a connoissance,
ja n'i connoistra differeance,
san quoi ne peut venir en place
diffinicion que l'an face. (21543-52)
[Thus things go by contraries; one is the gloss of the other. If one wants to define one of the pair, he must remember the other, or he will never, by any intention, assign a definition to it; for he who has no understanding of the two will never understand the difference between them, and without this difference, no definition that one may make can come to anything.] (Dahlberg 351)

[4]Gregory, too, comments on the letter and spirit passage, calling attention to the need to see beyond the carnal, to uncover what is hidden by literalness:

> Gregory the Great, for example, in the Prologue to his Commentary on the Song of Songs, writes: "The letter kills, as it is written, but the spirit gives life (2 Cor.3.6): Thus the letter covers the spirit as the chaff covers the grain; to eat the chaff is to be a beast of burden; but to eat the grain is to be a man." (Peck 145)

[5]Robert McMahon notes,

> Augustine interprets this anomaly [the "be fruitful and multiply" command in Genesis pertaining to both beasts and man] allegorically. His interpretation, in fact, concerns the very principles of polysemous allegory: "But as to what may in such wise increase and multiply that a single thing may be stated in many ways and a single statement may be understood in many ways, this we find only in signs corporeally expressed and in things intelligibly conceived." (107, citing Confessions 13.24.37)

[6]Singleton translates, "The passing beyond humanity may not be set forth in words: therefore let the example suffice any for whom grace reserves the experience" (7).

[7]Goldsmith notes,

> It is the belief of both Ambrose and Augustine that in "unveiling" the words of prophecy they are coming closer to Christ; the revelation of God is not merely something to be learnt about, but something to take into oneself, so that to reveal the Truth in Moses is at the same time to reveal the god-likeness in oneself. (33)

[8]See Freccero 122.

[9]Mark C. Taylor describes the dual of that which is covered and that which is revealed:

> Nothing is what it appears to be. Things and events always point beyond themselves to a concealed meaning that is, in fact, their truth. In the course of the ontotheological tradition, the relation between manifest and latent has been expressed in many ways. For example: Old Testament/New Testament, Old Covenant/New Covenant, carnal/spiritual, shadow/light, visible/invisible,

surface/depth, foreground/background, familiar/strange, literal/figurative, Vorstellung/Begriff, Mythos/Logos, language/desire, etc. Each pair of items points to a similar dilemma. If surface covers a more profound depth, then hidden truth must be discovered through an act of interpretation. (Erring 56)

[10]See also Bowers:

Suspicion that language has the potential to corrupt mankind runs as deep in Langland's poem as his respect for its power to effect divine miracles. . . .Indeed, the desire for mede or material reward lies behind much of the perversion of speech. (196-7)

[11]Robert Adams examines the double-sense of "mede" and its relationship to grace:

. . . [T]he B version seeks to express the paradox of an essential, indeed, sacred, human impulse distorted through sin by insisting on there being "two manere of Medes" (3.231ff.), the first being God's gift of salvation to the virtuous soul and the second being earthly bribery. ("Mede" 217)

[12]See also Vasta 68-83; Goldsmith 30; and Bowers 124. Murtaugh, however, disagrees:

It is tempting to see in these last two lines the mystical doctrine of "deification," according to which the soul in contemplation restores its "likeness" (similitudo) to God to its full clarity and achieves a transitory foretaste of the Beatific Vision. But I think we must resist this temptation because Lady Holy Church makes no specific reference to the disciplines of mysticism. (6)

[13]Bell notes,

This capacity to approach God, to become like him, to actualize one's participation in him, is possible for man alone of the inhabitants of earth, and the reason is simple: stones participate in esse; animals in esse and vivere; but only man in esse, vivere, and intelligere (29; see also 42-43)

See also O'Donovan:

The imago Dei is found perfected in the conscious self-relationships of perfected man, and yet those perfected self-relationships can only exist in conjunction with the contemplation of and the

worship of God. Here is some-thing Platonic and at the same time Christian. (88)

[14]Of course, as Aquinas and others point out, there can never be complete similitude; man can become like God, but he can never become fully like him, nor can he understand him fully: "[t]he human mind, which resembles God more closely than any other created thing, cannot represent him fully, even in the state of beatitude. Only Christ is the perfect image of God" (Colish, Mirror 149).

[15]See Taylor, Erring 45.

[16]McMahon, "Augustine as Text-Work" examines possible links between Augustine's conversion account and the Narcissus myth; see also Hawkins, who examines Augustine's conversion as a "paradigmatic example of the Pauline crisis conversion" which, in turn, "functions to facilitate (or mirror) the conversions of those who read his Confessions." (52-53) The role of "mirror" in Pauline theology is examined at length in Edward Peter Nolan's recent book; see especially 55-81, on Augustine's conversion and 115-132, on Narcissus.

[17]Ovid, Metamorphoses III: 402-510; see also relevant commentary by Barkan 46-52; Bergmann 57-73; Brenkman 293-327; Goldin; Hult; Knoespel; Kristeva 103-121; Nightingale; Nuttall 141-145; Meltzer 114-115; Taylor, Erring 29-33; Vinge.

Related issues of mirroring are examined in Beaujour; Grabes; Sugarman; Ziolkowski. Geoffrey of Vinsauf comments on the relationship between mirroring and interpretation: "Talis transsumptio verbi / Est tibi pro speculo: quia te specularis in illo" (Such a metaphorical use of words serves you like a mirror, for you can see yourself in it"); cited by Leupin 138. See also J. Allen, 200-201.

[18]Augustinian theology's understanding of self-love and the love of God is examined by Colish, Mirror:

> Love of self, he says, can be understood in the interaction of the soul, its knowledge, and its love. The soul must know itself before it can love itself, and, concurrently, it must possess the desire of a lover in order to seek self-knowledge in the first place. (50)

> We can know God as he is only if we become like him, he says; and we can become like him only by knowing him. This appears to be a tautology, but, for Augustine, it is instead a dynamic opportunity, an opportunity which God makes possible by incorporating man into the life of the Trinity through the gift of the Holy Spirit. (54)

See also Kristeva:

> It is thus love of one's own self as one's own good that determines and directs other consecutive loves. This love of "one's own self," however, should be conceived only as participation in ontological good, which obviously refers to God. . . . Thus without access to one's own good there can be no access to God. Without self-love, no love for God can be perceived or thought, and, consequently, no gift of love for others. (Tales 174-6)

"IMPRENTIT IN THE FANTASY": SELF-REFLEXIVE METAPHORS OF MAKING IN HENRYSON'S TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID

Henryson's Testament, like Chaucer's Troilus, is a poem about eros. As such, then, speaking in terms of the equivalence endorsed by readers whose judgments have already been cited at length, it is a poem about poetry. In John Freccero's words,

> Ever since Augustine, the Middle Ages insisted upon the link between eros and language, between the reaching out in desire for what mortals can never possess and the reaching out of language toward the significance of silence. . . . The search for the self which is the quest of the poet can only be accomplished through the mediation of the imagination, the Narcissus image which is at once an image of the self and all that the self is not. ("Medusa" 130)

Beyond the bitter sardonicism of the vetus homo, the cheap sentimentality of age's reflecting on youth, and the banal platitudinousness of the inhering didactic, Henryson's narrator is, above all else, a poet: a self-reflexive reader of texts and maker of metaphor. His role as poet provides not only a framework for the construction of the text itself, but an internal critical commentary on the role and functioning of poetic processes as well, particularly as they reconcile issues of language and self. Just as the poem tells a story about the narrator's reading, so, too, does it tell about his telling; how the text tells

its story is as much or more a concern of the narrator as is the story itself.

The opening lines of the Testament[1] provide an important image for reading both the framing stanzas and the story itself: comparison and evaluation. The narrator identifies a potential strategy for developing an interpretation of his text:

> Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairfull dyte
> Sult correspond and be equivalent:
> Richt sa it wes quhen I began to wryte
> This tragedie, the wedder richt fervent,
> Quhen Aries, in middis of the Lent,
> Schouris of haill gart fra the north discend,
> That scantlie fra the cauld I micht defend. (1-7)

Here, the "sessoun" and the "dyte" are linked together not only within the evocation of conventional decorum, but, more important, as items that "correspond" and which are "equivalent." The narrator insists that an alignment be made, that the items be glossed in terms of comparison-contrast, parity-disparity, concord-discord, equivalence-measurement, and the like.

The emphasis on "correspond" calls attention to the poetic process of juxtaposition, that paired items may be analyzed according to some framework of correspondence, some approach or method of assessment or definition. However arbitrary the "sessoun" may seem in relation to "dyte," the narrator insists that a correspondence be made; the convention of Bede's De Temporibus Anni is fairly standard in its treatment of weather and text--the

mood of the former corresponds to the mood of the latter for thematic purposes, even if illogical in terms of causality--but the narrator uses it not only to set mood but also to set a critical framework for making and reading.[2] In order to make poetry, the narrator will need to use comparison, just as the reader, too, will need to evoke an epistemology of pairing in order to make sense and meaning of the language beyond its most pedestrian, literal level. By immediately calling attention to the role of correspondence, the narrator sets a context of metaphor, calling attention to the process of the poetry as it unfolds. The seemingly arbitrary alignment of internal theme and external weather also sets up a context for the narrator's later treatment of mediation; here, the arbitrary association adheres to decorum and, as such, hardly seems obtrusive, but later the narrator will question the role of mediation within the context of metaphor and the instrumentality of poetic comparison.

More important at the onset is the narrator's treatment of equivalence, for in order for the judgment of what is or is not "equivalent" to be made there must first be alignment, correspondence, though the significance of the correspondence is the degree of equivalence. In other words, after establishing correspondence, the author/audience's next task is to analyze the dual in

order to find meaning. If items are "equivalent," then they must be so within some prescribed context according to some prescribed system of measurement, since "meaning" must be derived according to some method and expressed within some context. "Equivalent" then means that some criteria of measurement are satisfied and that some relationship meaningfully exists within some prescribed framework of expression. It is important, too, to note that the items are described as "equivalent," not "equal." If the items were, indeed, "equal," then there would be no meaning, no metaphor, no poetry; there would be repetition, redundancy, tautology, unisemy, and language would signify only at a denotative level, since there must be room for polysemy if language is to signify beyond the literal sense.

The narrator's attention to equivalence as opposed to equality evokes the "epistemology by contraries" so crucial to poetic making, perhaps best articulated by Jean de Meun:

> Ainsinc va des contreres choses,
> les unes sunt des autres gloses;
> et qui l'une an veust definit,
> de l'autre li doit souvenir,
> ou ja, par nule antancion,
> n'i metra diffinicion;
> car qui des .II. n'a connoissance,
> ja n'i connoistra differeance,
> san quoi ne peut venir en place
> diffinicion que l'an face. (21543-52)
>
> [Thus things go by contraries; one is the gloss of the other. If one wants to define one of the pair,

> he must remember the other, or he will never, by any intention, assign a definition to it; for he who has no understanding of the two will never understand the difference between them, and without this difference no definition that one may make can come to anything.] (Dahlberg 351)

As Jean de Meun indicates, any understanding or definition is contingent upon one's understanding that the items must be evaluated in conjunction with each other; they are defined not individually or exclusively, but as they correspond to each other, as they are juxtaposed.[3] Moreover, epistemology depends not only on one's recognition of the paired items, but of "sameness" and "difference" as well. The gap between "sameness" and "difference" is a distance which must be negotiated, or transgressed; to cross over that distance is to ascribe definition and it can be done only in the paradoxical process of understanding what is in terms of what isn't.[4]

Henryson's narrator recognizes that in this deceptively simple epistemological concept lies a multitude of paradoxical possibilites when applied to language. "Difference" entails a complex relationship of comparison and contrast, calling attention to sameness and difference while paradoxically insisting that the former and latter are distinguishable precisely because they are the same; in other words, metaphor-making entails an alignment of items which, according to the textual construct, are equivalent but not equal even as one

defines the other. This epistemology is, of course, echoed by Chaucer's Pandarus: "By his contrarie is every thyng declared" (1.637). Pandarus comments, too,

> For how myghte evere swetnesse han ben knowe
> To him that nevere tasted bitternesse?
> Ne no man may ben inly glad, I trowe,
> That nevere was in sorwe or som destresse.
> Eke whit by blak, by shame ek worthinesse,
> Ech set by other, more for other semeth,
> As men may se, and so the wyse it demeth (1.638-44)

and concludes that ". . . of two contraries is o lore" (1.645). Just as Chaucer's narrator, through Pandarus, calls attention to the crucial role of comparison in the making of poetry, so, too, does Henryson's narrator call attention to the crucial role of comparison in intertextuality; just as Henryson's narrator insists on the necessity of comparison within the text, so, too, does he inadvertently insist upon comparison with Chaucer's text by means of allusion and glossing. The Testament is a text both compared and comparing--it invites comparison with Chaucer's Troilus as intertext, and in itself it comments upon its own uses of comparison in the formation of metaphoric constructs.

Metaphor--the language of poetry, and, indeed, of everyday life--may be understood in terms of the comparison paradigm. As a construction of language whereby two items are collocated, metaphor is comparison: the metaphoric copula "is," whether explicit or implied, governs by ratio, in that the items are set up not only as comparative (i.e.,

similar) but also as contrasting (different). The difference thus allows for many--indeed, infinite--interpretations, since the relationship between the compared items is hardly a certainty. Difference means that polysemy is possible, that many meanings may be understood from a single instance of metaphor and that while the meanings compete semantically, the reader privileges at will ("impositio ad placitum," comments Augustine).[5] Thus while the immediate, "proper" sense of a word (signum proprium) can be understood on a generally accepted, denotative level, the imposed, "improper" senses (signa translata) are subject to individual interpretation.

Henryson's narrator explicates the epistemology by contraries throughout his text by means of pairing and comparing, calling attention to both the "equivalence" of the compared items and, more important, the very processes by which the comparisons are made. That is, the process of comparing is described through images of comparison; the metaphors of making are themselves instances of comparison that call attention to that very function. They are self-reflexive, themselves both subject of the text and object of the comparison; they are images of their own processes. In the first six stanzas, for instance, are comparisons of "cauld" and "fyre" (27-28), "age" and "youtheid" (29-30), "purifyit air" and "mistie

clouds" (17-18), "physike" and "nature" (34), "bemis. . .sylit under cure" (9-10) and those that "brast sa fair" (15), and even reading--"une quair"--as opposed to "all uther sport" (34).

At each instance of pairing, the narrator subtly reminds his reader that any comparison is an epistemolgical crux that calls into question "meaning" itself--there is no "meaning" per se, only possibilities. Hence the narrator's initial directive, that items should "correspond and be equivalent": correspondence implies some logical basis for comparison, some reasonable association of paired items, yet equivalence suggests that any attempt at comparison is both an exercise in futility--since equivalence cannot be equality--and an assertion of definition, since understanding and meaning are contingent upon the very difference that renders meaning problematic.

Opposites are thus paradoxically "equivalent," as the narrator suggests. For any two items to be diametrically opposed--epistemological contraries--they must be accorded equal worth. If one item is to balance or to complement another, the two must be regarded as equivalent, especially if one of the pair is to be isolated and privileged--a point effectively illustrated by the "wraikful sentence" (329) of Saturn:

I change thy mirth into melancholy,
Quhilk is the mother of all pensivenes;
Thy moisture and thy heit in cald and dry;
Thyne insolence, thy play and wantones
To greit diseis; thy pomp and thy riches
In mortall neid; and greit penuritie
Thow suffer sall, and as ane beggar die. (316-22)

This passage is marked not only by Saturn's extraordinary cruelty, but by his eloquent attention to the language of contraries; Saturn uses this epistemology as a rhetoric that establishes the logical correspondence of the items while demonstrating the paradoxical "equivalence" of the paired items: epistemologically, they are paired and thus equivalent, yet their practical, real effects differ vastly.

Of course, the extent of "difference" is not always so readily marked, for an important example of the narrator's attention to the language of comparison in the framing stanzas is the comparison of the oratur and the chalmer, couched in terms of seeing and reflecting:

Yit neuertheles within myne oratur
I stude, quhen Titan had his bemis bricht
Withdrawin doun and sylit under cure,
And fair Venus, the bewtie of the nicht,
Uprais and set unto the west full richt
Hir goldin face, in oppositioun
Of God Phebus, direct discending doun.

Throwout the glas hir bemis brast sa fair
That I might se on everie syde me by;
The northin wind had purifyit the air
And shed the mistie cloudis fra the sky;
The froist freisit, the blastis bitterly
Fra Pole Artick come quhisling loud and schill,
And causit me remufe aganis my will. (8-21)

The narrator here notes that the "bemis bricht" of Titan

have been withdrawn, placed under cover; the light is concealed behind some "cure," rendering it unavailable. Venus, in an unnatural and astronomologically implausible position, is in opposition to Phebus, whose beams have already been described as concealed; the light of Venus, however, supplies plenty of light (again, unnaturally so), "Throwout the glas."

The beams of light coming through the glass enable the narrator to see clearly ("That I micht se on everie syde me by"); the reflection of the planet's light provides illumination. In addition, the light identified as emanating from "Venus" may be understood as coming not only from the physical planet and its position to the sun, but also from Venus as "lufis quene" (22), the source of "light" as "love." In other words, as love's queen Venus is a source of light and enlightenment; she has the power of erotic illumination, the ability to instill in mortals the "burning passions and cold pangs of love" (Fox 51). Yet at the same time, the object of illumination is an oratur, a place of prayer and contemplation, not a place of sensual endeavor; the oratur is illuminated by the goddess of love in a paradoxical image which, like the beams themselves, is fleeting and intangible.

The narrator, of course, abandons the oratur for the chalmer, a relocation that is, he notes, "aganis my will"

(22). The theme of unnatural discord first illustrated by the season and then by the planetary positions is further developed by the resistant narrator's movement, for he leaves the oratur of Venus for the chalmer--where he will read the "uther quair," of "lustie Creisseid" (69). That is, he leaves the location governed by Venus to read a tale governed by Venus; he leaves the oratur of prayer for the chalmer of poetry, apparently abandoning Venus for Venus. The illumination of the oratur by Venus's "bemis" is transported along with the narrator to his new location; he is as much enlightened by the "bemis" of Venus in the place of poetry as he was in the place of prayer.

The narrator's twofold description of location in the opening frame evokes the familiar Pauline epistemological and theological directive:

> Videmus enim nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem; nunc cognosco ex parte, tunc autem cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum. (1 Cor.13.12)
>
> [We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.]

Paul's directive supplies a key metaphor, of hindered vision owing to the mediation and instrumentality of the glass.[6] Significantly, he links this obscured vision with self-reflexivity, i.e., knowing the self through the self and the self's coming face to face with the transcendent

Other. Paul's directive, then, implies that to know oneself, one must first see oneself as one is and as one is seen.

The narrator is, of course, provided with light by the beams that shine through the glass, his observations illuminated literally by the reflected light of the planetary position. But he then sees through the glass darkly, his light source having been left behind; more important, the language of poetry is language obscured and ambiguous owing to its necessary "difference," its polysemy.

In removing himself from the illumination supplied by Venus and transporting himself to a location of ambiguity and concealment, the narrator trans-gresses the boundary between what is clear, obvious, simple, and literal and shifts instead to that which is dark, hidden, complex, and figurative. In transgressing the boundary, the narrator provides himself and his audience with the opportunity to explore possibilities of language and meaning, to see through the obscurity and ambiguity and to develop awareness and understanding:

> Though creation is a dark glass, it is, nevertheless, a glass: something through which we can see. Man is invited, in medieval Christian thought, to taste and to see, to compare, to evaluate, to read, to interpret, and then to grow toward understanding. (Jeffrey 6)

His movement from oratur to chalmer may be read as a movement from old ways of seeing to new, from the safety of the oratur to the uncertainty of the chalmer.

Of course, his treatment of Venus as his source of light in the oratur is couched in figurative language, for, obviously, Venus herself is not physically present in the oratur and if she were, she'd hardly supply luminescence. But the oratur is a place characterized by limitation; it is a place where adherence and obedience obtain. As the Testament narrator explains,

> For I traisit that Venus, luifis quene,
> To quhome sumtyme I hecht obedience,
> My faidit hart of lufe sho wald mak grene,
> And therupon with humbill reverence
> I thocht to pray hir hie magnificence;
> Bot for greit cald as than I lattit was
> And in my chalmer to the fyre can pas. (22-28)

The rigidity of his proposed ritual service to Venus is thwarted by the cold, and his relocation is a reluctant one. But although in his mind he wishes to stay, he gives priority to the needs of his body.

The movement from oratur to chalmer supplies, too, a metaphor of through-ness that reiterates the images of the beams' passing through the glass. The parallelism of the dynamic images calls attention to the crucial role of reflexivity in Henryson's text. Just as the movement of the narrator is described as imposed--against his will--so, too, may the "movement" of reflexivity be described. That is, reflexivity as "reflection," or looking back upon, is

an imposition of meaning based on understanding derived not only from the item being scrutinized, but from other sources as well; similarly, in its grammatical sense, reflexivity as suggested by the reflecting images lends emphasis to the tautological yet problematic dualities inhering in the construction of poetic equivalents. Hence images of seeing, reflecting, and mirroring as supplied throughout the text indicate the crucial roles of identification, signification, and glossing in the formation and interpretation of metaphoric language; this poetics of reflexivity is articulated in terms of comparison.

The importance of reflection/reflexivity for the Testament is perhaps best exemplified in the final stanza, in which the narrator both concludes the text and brings his readers back to the beginning, inviting them to reflect upon that to which they have just been exposed. The final stanza of the Testament supplies a key image of mirroring that may be used to reflect upon the preceding text: "Beir in your mynd," he warns. Just as Chaucer's narrator concludes with an image of reflection and mirroring, in an evocation of the imago Dei:[7]

> O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
> In which that love up groweth with youre age,
> Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
> And of youre herte up casteth the visage
> To thilke God that after his ymage
> Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire

> This world, that passeth soone aas floures faire. (5.1835-1842)

So, too, does Henryson's narrator call attention to the role of imaging in the interpretation of texts. Henryson's narrator, following Chaucer's, suggests that one employ a process of reflection, especially self-reflection, as part of reading and understanding possible meaning in textual interaction. The kind of self-reflexivity advocated by both narrators received approval as early as Plotinus:

> Withdraw within yourself and look. . . . Do you dwell purely within yourself, without any obstacle to unity, does nothing foreign anymore, by its sub-mixture, alter the simplicity of your interior essence?. . . . Then must you observe carefully, for yours will be the only eye that is able to perceive supreme Beauty. (Enneads, I.6,9,7ff, cited in Kristeva, Tales 108)

In glossing the passage, Kristeva notes, "Here one witnesses a masterful synthesis between the Platonic quest for ideal beauty and the autoeroticism of one's own image, which inevitably suggests Narcissus" (108-109). In other words, self-reflection (self-reflexivity) is part of the interpretive process; interpretation begins with the self's own awareness in terms of image--even if, arguably, autoerotic--and develops into an application of that reflexivity.

Henryson's choice of metaphor here is significant, for the kind of mental imaging that he describes is similar to other instances of mirroring throughout the

text, instances that underscore the crucial link between self-reflexivity and interpretation.[8] The link can be described in terms of a Narcissus theme that informs both texts: imaging metaphors--themselves metaphors of making--call attention to key themes of identity and image, and serve as a reminder that poetry and language deal with equivalences, not equals; substitutes, not the "real"; and images rather than likenesses. Further, the mind internalizes and personalizes the text as it will; in effect, any interpretation is a narcissistic act, for any act of interpretation involves the kind of turning toward the self that characterizes the paradoxical crux of Narcissus.

The Narcissus crux as an interpretive instrument is perhaps best illustrated in the paradoxical recognition scene. First, Troylus almost recognizes Cresseid, but fails to identify whatever it is about the leper woman that he finds familiar:

> Than upon him scho kest up baith hir ene--
> And with ane blenk it come into his thocht
> That sumtime hir face befoir had sense.
> Bot scho was in sic plye he knew hir nocht;
> Yit than hir luik into his mynd it brocht
> The sweit visage and amorous blenking
> Of fair Cresseid, sumtyme his awin darling.
>
> Na wonder was, suppois in mynd that he
> Tuik hir figure sa sone--and lo, now quhy:
> The idole of ane thing in cace may be
> Sa deip imprentit in the fantasy
> That it deludis the wittis outwardly,

> And sa appeiris in forme and lyke estait
> Withn the mynd as it was figurait. (498-511)

Apparently, Troylus sees something in the disfigured face that reminds him of Cresseid; moreover, the recognition calls to mind his own "fantasy," or imagination, his own image of what Cresseid was to him. For a moment, he can see the image of Cresseid as he wishes her to be, the "figure," "idole," and "fantasy" created "in mynd" and "by cace."[9] Troylus's wits are deluded, but by choice, as he recalls the desired image.

The Troylus of the Testament is enamored of an image in his mind, as is Chaucer's Troilus; each sees in his mind's eye the object of desire as an image of that which he desires, and each is stirred to passion by the representation of the imagination rather than the "real" woman. Chaucer's Troilus, for instance, is enthralled by his mind's image in a moment of narcissistic pining:

> Thus gan he make a mirour of his mynde,
> In which he saugh al holly hire figure;
> And that he wel koude in his herte fynde,
> It was to hym a right good aventure
> To love swich oon, and if he dede his cure
> To serven hir, yet myghte he falle in grace,
> Or ellis for oon of hire servantz pace. (1.365-71)

Henryson's Troylus participates briefly in such narcissistic pining, eroticizing the unfulfilled desire for that which exists according to his imagination's description. Since this is the case, that Troylus fails to recognize Cresseid is understandable, owing to her

disfigured face, though he does not think to ask the identity of the woman who has prompted so profound an emotional response.

Oddly enough, Cresseid, too, fails to recognize the object of her own past desire, even as she witnesses facial evidence of his emotional disturbance: "Withn ane quhyle he changit mony hew, / And neuertheles not ane ane uther knew" (517-18). Apparently, neither recognizes the other owing to change; each has grown so different from the parting image of the other that the reality cannot be reconciled with the memory. When Troylus is identified to her after his departure, in hindsight Cresseid deems Troylus "trew," and herself "fals" (546), and is tortured by the acknowledgment of what she has done, especially since Troylus has given generously to her, the anonymous leper. Indeed, while she believes her punishment to be too great for the crime of her blasphemy, she accepts the punishment as just for her falseness to Troylus, though the latter is hardly the crime for which the sentence has been effected. She recognizes the disastrous consequences of her own mutability, and, before engaging in her philanthropic finale, she describes her frailty:

> Becaus I knew the greit unstabilnes,
> Brukkil as glas, into myself, I say,
> Traisting in uther als greit unfaithfulnes,
> Als unconstant and als untrew of fay--
> Thocht sum be trew, I wait richt few ar thay:

> Quha findis treuth lat hiim his lady ruse!
> Nane but myself as now I will accuse. (568-74)

Here, in a moment of self-reflection, Cresseid comes to terms with her own fault in her situation; she accepts the sorry circumstances of her fickle ways, and accepts blame. Moreover, she describes herself as "Brukkil as glas," calling attention not only to the material fragility of the glass, but also to the fragility and fleetingness of the image in the glass; she implicitly suggests that she, like an image in the glass, is impossible to hold on to and that the reality of the self is indeed a disappointment when compared to the perfection of the image.

Cresseid's self-reflection here works in conjunction with her self-analysis when first reconciling herself with the horror of Saturn's sentence:

> . . . Than rais scho up and tuik
> Ane poleist glas, and hir schaddow cult luik;
> And quhen scho saw hir face sa deformait,
> Gif scho in hart was wa aneuch, God wait! (347-50)

She calls attention to the disfigurement of her face, and acknowledges that this disfigurement is the cruelest part of the punishment:

> My cleir voice and courtlie carrolling,
> Quhair I was wont with ladyis for to sing,
> Is rawk as ruik ful hiddeous, hoir and hace;
> My plesand port, all utheris precelling,
> Of lustines I was hald maist conding--
> Now is deformit the figour of my face;
> To luik on it na leid now lyking hes.
> Sowpit in syte, I say with sair siching,
> Ludgeit amang the lipper lied: "Allace!" (443-51)

Cresseid asks that other women use her as an example, that

they maintain an image of her in their minds to use as a warning: "Be war in tyme, approchis neir the end, / And in your mynd ane mirrour make of me" (456-7); "Exempill mak of me in your memour / Quhilk of sic thingis wofull witnes beiris" (465-6).[10] Cresseid, then, understands the role of mirroring and self-reflection as part of the larger, dynamic process of coming to terms with mistakes and their consequences; she sees herself per speculum in aenigmate, but in her final moments of self-recognition, facie ad faciem.

Whether she is "redeemed" or not is, of course, debatable.[11] Cresseid is remorseful and, perhaps, penitent at the end, self-aware of and self-blaming for her sexual misconduct; however, she never really expresses regret for or understanding of the crime for which she has been punished: her blasphemy. She notes that she has paid a high price for her quarrel, and rues the "woful tyde" (356), but her lamentation never specifically addresses her transgression. Even her warning to the other ladies is a lamentation comprising commonplaces of Fortune; there is no real acknowledgment of the crime. Of course, her final self-analysis and self-awareness are largely commendable, and perhaps Cresseid recognizes the crucial role of language in her circumstances. Her testament, or "law," uses language to reconcile the consequences of her

past ab/use, though it, too, is ambiguous as to the specific nature of the transgression. Despite the ambiguity, however, her use of the testament is usurpative and trans-gressive--narcissistic--fueled by her new self-awareness, even if the extent of that self-awareness is unclear.

The narrator uses the episodes of mirroring to call attention to narcissistic uses of language in the text and to call attention to the crucial role of shame in relation to Narcissus and, indeed, to textuality itself. The role of shame in relation to the Narcissus theme is an important one, for shame provides the crucial balance that tempers narcissistic interpretation, preventing the kind of autoerotic fascination[12] that culminates in unisemous, exclusive appropriation.

The Testament seems informed, perhaps oddly so at times, by an underlying fear of exposure; this fear of shame and, indeed, shame itself are demonstrated by the narrator in his framing remarks and within the story of Cresseid as well. There seems to be an on-going concern with shame, the painful exposure of the real self witnessed by the self and perhaps by others as well;[13] this kind of shame may also be described as ". . . a motion of the will rightly ordered by the reason and a motion which, as such, interrupts the narcissistic gesture" (Shoaf, Currency of the Word 66). For example,

> Quhen thay togidder murnit had full lang,
> Quod Cresseid: "Father, I wald not be kend;
> Thairfoir in secrreit wyse ye let me gang
> Wnto yone spitall at the tounis end,
> And thidder sum meit for cheritie me send
> To leif upon . . .
>
> Than in ane mantill and ane bawer hat,
> With cop and clapper, wonder prively,
> He opnit ane secreit yet and out thairat
> Convoyit hir, tha na man suld espy,
> Wnto ane village half ane myle thairby;
> Delyverit hir in at the spittaill hous,
> And daylie sent hir part of his almous. (379-92)

Cresseid apparently is so ashamed of her disfigured face that she wishes to hide both it and herself; a "secreit wyse" is used so that she might avoid detection: "no man suld espy." Hiding, or concealing, the source of her shame is the only remedy that Cresseid can muster. This is similar to her earlier hiding at the temple:

> Into the kirk wald not hirself present . . .
> Bot past into ane secreit orature,
> Quhair scho micht weip hir wofull desteny. (117-21)

In both cases, Cresseid's shame prompts her to hide, and in both cases the fear of potential shameful exposure is important enough to her that she prioritizes its concealment; indeed, her initial hiding--at the temple of Venus and Cupid--sets into motion the blasphemy for which she is later punished and for which she is later shamed and which will later fuel her narcissitic self-analysis and, arguably, her redemption.

The narcissism inhering in the narration is underscored by the narrator's employment of fin'amors

pining within and without his story of Cresseid; his internalization of the text is framed by the text's internalization of his own apparent pining. That is, the narrator apparently eroticizes his own suffering--in effect, he becomes a Narcissus--and uses that erotization to inform his glossing of Cresseid.

Hence the narrator's appropriation of the Creisseid character seems biased by his own self-proclaimed celibate status. It seems that the influence of St. Paul's writings on the narrator affects his opinion of his subject, Cresseid, yet at the same time he seems almost obsessed with a desire to desire her; the narrator seems torn between the caritas advocated by Pauline theology--a theology profoundly informing the poetics of the narrator's text--and the very cupiditas for which he attempts to condemn Cresseid. The difference is a crucial one, for within this gap the narrator participates in the narcissistic process necessary for interpretation:

> Cupiditas, of course, means far more than avarice. In the deep Christian and Augustinian sense in which it is the root of evils and the contrary of caritas it refers to a consuming desire for that which one is lacking--it means wanting in both senses, or rather, in a particular way. (Leicester 45)

Lacking his own object of desire and condemning himself for that very desire, the narrator apparently transfers the affective suffering of his dilemma to Creisseid, whom he punishes vicariously, perhaps, for his own lust.

Whether or not the narrator is "misogynistic," he does seem to harbor a dual desire/hatred for his character.[14] For example, in usurping the character from Chaucer, Henryson's narrator inverts the effect of Chaucer's rather flattering description:

> Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,
> In widewes habit blak; but natheles,
> Right as oure first lettre is now an A,
> In beaute first so stood she, makeles.
> Hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees.
> Nas nevere yet seyn thyng to be preysed derre,
> Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre. (1.169-75)

Chaucer's narrator insists that she is matchless, without comparison; any woman compared to her would seem deficient. Henryson's narrator, however, tarnishes this image:

> O fair Cresseid, the flour and A per se
> Of Troy and Grece, how was thow fortunait
> To change in filth all thy feminitie,
> And be with fleschelie lust sa maculait,
> And go amang the Greikis air and lait,
> Sa giglotlike takand thy foull plesance! (78-83)

Henryson's narrator uses Chaucer's narrator's description as the basis for his comparison, and, as predicted, the portrait is now presented in negative terms. But the character is supposedly the same--and yet in his usurpation and transformation, Henryson's narrator focuses not on her beauty but instead on what he suggests is her sinful, dirty carnality: "fleschelie lust sa maculait." Interestingly enough, the narrator underscores this descrepancy with his initial description of Chaucer's text: "Writtin be worthie

Chaucer glorious / Of fair Creisseid and worthie Troylus" (41-42). He acknowledges Chaucer's portrait as "fair," yet follows with his own transformation.

Thus the narrator's construction of Cresseid is, like the construction of his text, a Pygmalion-like[15] attempt at reproducing the desired image invented by himself, whether the intent be to glorify or to punish. Obviously, he chooses the latter, transforming the image into something ugly and undesirable; his aim seems to be to tarnish her memory, to textualize her shameful behavior that others may read and agree. The text becomes the medium of her punishment, for in textualizing her "fatall destinie" (62), the narrator ensures that his version will be part of Cresseid's "history."

Yet Cresseid is damned not by false love, but by the false language of blasphemy. Her blasphemy is the crime for which she is punished (if her dream is to be believed), not her betrayal of Troylus, and it is this "trespas" (371) that informs the core of the text:

> Allace, that euer I maid yow sacrifice!
>
> Ye gave me anis ane devine responsaill
> That I suld be the flour of luif in Troy;
> Now am I maid ane unworthie outwaill,
> And all in cair translatit is my joy.
> Quha sall me gyde? Quha sall me now convoy,
> Sen I fra Diomeid and nobill Troylus
> Am clene excludit, as abject odious?
>
> O fals Cupide, is nane to wyte bot thow
> And thy mother, of lufe the blind goddes!

> Ye causit me alwayis understand and trow
> The seid of lufe was sawin in my face,
> And ay grew grene throw your supplie and grace.
> But now, allace, that seid with froist is slane,
> And I fra luifferis left and all forlane! (126-41)

Cresseid recognizes that her joy has been translated into wretchedness, though the wretchedness to follow will supply a new contrary to the wretchedness that prompts the curse, and the former will seem tolerable after the latter is inflicted. What Cresseid does not recognize here, however, is the effect of her words. In using verbal utterances to express her frustration, Cresseid offends the gods. Once spoken, the words are no longer proper to her; they are aurally "read" by an audience hardly inclined to ignore the magnitude of Cresseid's public disrespect (again, the theme of public exposure as motivation is suggested). Her abuse of language serves as a reminder that any use of language is likewise abuse, for in personalizing language, Cresseid appropriates it, and finds out that one cannot possess language--one cannot control how it will be perceived or received.

Hence the gods' treatment of language during the sentencing episode--their words are angry, their intentions vengeful, and their language defacing: "Wrything his face with mony angrie word" (189), "Richt pungitive with wordis odious" (229). The gods concern themselves foremost with the need to protect their reputation, to avoid embarrassment:

> "Lo," quod Cupide, "quha will blaspheme the name
> Of his awin god, outher in word or deid,
> To all goddis he dois baith lak and schame,
> And suld have bitter panis to his meid." (274-77)

The gods, too, appropriate language, but they do not transgress the limits of decorum in doing so. In other words, they have a sense of propriety, of shame, and work within the accepted limits; they, unlike Cresseid, recognize the propriety of established boundaries and do not transgress those boundaries in self-serving--and ultimately self-destructive--utterances. In short, the gods are as concerned with their own reputations as Cresseid seems to be with hers, but rather than project their displeasure inappropriately, they use the language appropriately as a means of passing judgment and sentence; they condemn Cresseid for her misuse of language while retaining the propriety of their own. Despite their self-importance, an apparent sense of shame prevents them from over-stepping their bounds even as they protect and defend their names.

Narcissistic acts of interpretation are likewise tempered by shame. The narcissism is part of interpretation, but shame, too, is necessary in order to define boundaries, to identify limits. The limits may be transgressed, of course, but if a limit is to be consciously transgressed, it must first be recognized.

Interpretation, then, may be understood as the gap between or balance of the contraries narcissism and shame.

The narrator's use of shame as a metaphor of interpretation is similar to the subtle connection apparently suggested by the Gawain-poet at the conclusion of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:

> "þis is þe bende of þis blame I bere in my nek.
> Þis is þe laþe and þe losse þat I laȝt haue
> Of couardise and couetyse, þat I haf caȝt þare;
> Þ is is þe token of vntrawþe þat I am tan inne."
> (2506-9)

The treatment of shame by the earlier Gawain-poet can be helpful in reading the Testament, although it is highly unlikely that Henryson would have known the earlier text, though he might have known the appended motto: "Hony soyt qui mal pence" ("Shame be to him who thinks ill," i.e, let the shame belong to him who thinks it). Shame for both the Gawain-poet and Henryson suggests that as one judges, so he is judged; as one interprets, so he is interpreted by his choices.[16] The narrator's final remark that one bear in mind the lesson of the text also suggests that one keep in mind the nature of judgment and punishment when forming an opinion of Cresseid.

In terms of language, shame plays a significant role for the Testament's formation of metaphor and its internal consciousness of poetic language. Following Paul's metaphor of self-reflection, to see oneself is to know

oneself and to know oneself is to love oneself (and thus God); hence Augustine, in the Confessions:

> "May I know you, my knower, may I know you even as I am known" [Cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam sicut ut et cognitus sum, 10.1.1]. For Augustine, of course, the self cannot be known apart from God, nor can one know the original to whom "image and likeness" a person is made without thereby knowing oneself. (McMahon, Prayerful Ascent 151)

For the medieval Christian poet, to love oneself is to shame oneself, to admit humility, and thus through self-reflexivity, one comes to love God. But in doing so, one must recognize that his own image, when compared to God's, necessarily is inferior--hence there is a sense of shame, a knowledge of inferiority, a respect for the difference that renders one subordinate:

> However close we may come to God, to whatever degree we may participate in his various attributes, we can never claim identity with him. "When we pursue God by loving him," says Augustine, "we attain to him--not in that we are made entirely what he is, but by nearness to him, coming into contact with him in a wonderful and intelligible manner, and inwardly approaching and being illumined by his truth and holiness." (Bell 26-27)

Of course, to be shameless is, in this respect, to presume divinity, to deny the difference between God and man; hence shame, in its sense of Christian humility, is an admirable and necessary part of spirituality.[17]

The relationship between Augustinian/Pauline theology and narcissitic self-reflection is underscored by the attention given to carnality--both Pauline and erotic--throughout the text. Within the initial framing stanzas,

the narrator's concern with his corporeal needs is curiously developed after he leaves the oratur for the chalmer. The weather brings him back in touch with the painful suffering of eros. Just as the weather mediates theme in the opening lines, here, too, the temperature dictates, for his attention to temperature brings him to a place where his status as senex will be made more keen, even as it is vicariously treated in the text that he writes. With regard to eros he notes,

> Thocht lufe be hait, yit in ane man of age
> It kendillis nocht sa sone as in youtheid,
> Of quhome the blude is flowing in ane rage;
> And in the auld the curage doif and deid
> Of quhilk the fyre outward is best remeid:
> To help be phisike quhair that nature faillit
> I am expert, for baith I have assaillit. (29-35)

His concern with passion and lust here evokes fin' amors pining and lamentation; he mourns the loss of youth and the amorous possibilities that go along with it, and notes that something else will have to suffice, some substitute--the fire--is needed to help get his blood flowing. As a substitute for passion, the heat of the fire is an equivalent, a replacement, an exchange of the improper for the proper. Just as the narrator exchanges passion for heat, so too does he exchange eros for the text; the latter takes the place of the unavailable former even though the former is the obvious and proper object of immediate interest. The narrator thus eroticizes his suffering in the text of the subsequent tale; apparently,

because he himself is no longer realistically a participant in real eros, he fictionalizes it--constructing an image on which to focus his interests while, at the same time, condemning that very image for the eroticism that it/she conveys.

The narrator's concern with things corporeal and carnal applies to his reading and writing, for he carnalizes Chaucer's text, insisting upon its literal propriety, its validity as convention and tradition. He first "takes" it, just as he "takes" his drink--both are consumed, carnalized, internalized:

> I mend the fyre and beikit me about,
> Than tuik ane drink, my spreitis to comfort,
> And armit me weill fra tha cauld thairout.
> To cut the winter nicht and mak it schort
> I tuik ane quair--and left all uther sport--
> Writtin be worthie Chaucer glorious
> Of fair Creisseid and worthie Troylus. (36-42)

The "quair," like the "drink," is consumed as product; both are "taken" in the sense of consumption. The alignment of consumption and text is hardly novel in itself (cf. Apoc.10.9: "Accipe et devora illum" ["Take the book, and eat it up"])[18], but the narrator's use of this alignment is significant here in terms of the larger metaphor of carnality. In his consumption of the text, he suggests that the text, like the drink, is an item to be taken in by the body; it is taken as sustenance, as that which helps maintain the flesh, the carnal. In other

words, the parallel of text and drink suggests that both are consumed at a carnal level. By calling attention to his own carnality, the narrator suggests that in consuming the text carnally, he is a carnal, literal reader.

The link between carnality and literalness is first established by Paul and commented upon at length by Augustine; Paul's assertion, the foundation for this exploration of meaning,

> qui [Deus] et idoneos nos fecit ministros Novi Testamenti, non litterae sed Spiritus: littera enim occidit, Spiritus autem vivificat. (2 Cor.3.6)
>
> [Who also hath made us fit ministers of the new testament, not in the letter but in the spirit. For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.]

calls attention to the sterility of unisemy in literal adherence to the letter, and the fertility of polysemy in accepting the figurativeness of the verbal sign. Augustine, in De doctrina christiana,

> . . . deepens the link between carnal desire and reading, thereby establishing one of the more complex generative problematics of Western literature, considered as an open-ended inscription of self-thwarting human desire: . . . [W]hen that which is said figuratively is taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally [carnaliter]. (Vance, "Language" 9)

Augustine's writings on language and metaphor are, of course, vast, but in relation to Paul's use of "carnal" to describe that which is "literal," metaphor is defined by Augustine as

> . . .a kind of sign where "things that we signify by proper terms are usurped by others signifying something else." Thus a spiritual metaphor is a

> usurpation and transformation of what is carnal or "literal." (Vance, "Language" 6)

It is important to note that Paul and Augustine do not condemn everything that may be considered carnal; they recognize that carnal sustenance is a human necessity, provided it be taken in moderation. And, of course, the core Christian metaphor of the Word Incarnate insists upon a link between corpus and verbum.[19] But to take literally that which signifies figuratively is the carnality that leads to death, the letter that kills; the reader who takes the letter only at its literal level deprives himself of the letter's spirit.

The theological and epistemological impact of Paul's idea clearly extends to the narrator's reading of Chaucer's text. Hence the Testament narrator--already established as having a propensity towards the carnal--will engage reading Chaucer's "letter." Hence the narrator questions the truth of Chaucer's text--as a literal, carnal reader, the narrator is doubtless concerned with the accuracy and truth of Chaucer's text. He asks,

> Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?
> Nor I wait nocht gif this narratioun
> Be authoreist, or fenyeit of the new
> Be sum poeit, throw his inventioun
> Maid to report the lamentatioun
> And wofull end of this lustie Creisseid,
> And quhat distres scho thoillit, and quhat deid.
> (64-70)

His concern with truthfulness echoes the concern of Chaucer's own narrator with the accuracy and truthfulness

of both the text and his own reading of it:

> Wherfore I nyl have neither thank ne blame
> Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,
> Disblameth me, if any word be lame,
> For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I.
> Ek though I speeke of love unfelyngly,
> No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is;
> A blynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewis. (2.15-21)

Henryson's narrator, like Chaucer's, establishes authority before commenting on his own lack of experience regarding the subject of the tale that he narrates; calling attention to his own subjective bias calls into question his ability to adhere to his "authority," yet such an insistence is made nonetheless. Thus both narrators insist upon the literal authority of their texts, while subtly undermining that very authority. Each insists that the letter of the text is authoritative; the implication is that each narrator, as a carnal reader, reads "properly," adhering to the letter and privileging the literal, failing to usurp or to transform the carnal letter into a figurative sign.

Moreover, the insistence upon carnality underscores the narrators' apparent fear of exposed error; the narrators insist upon the accuracy and propriety of their narrations, thereby avoiding any responsibility for error. Should an error exist, or a misreading be indicated, any blame is already directed away from the narrator himself and towards his source text. Just as Chaucer's narrator

carefully insists upon the accuracy of his translation, so, too, does Henryson's narrator insist that he read the "uther quair," not explicity of his own making but instead an anonymous text that he merely restates. Also, by questioning whether what Chaucer wrote is true, he deflects blame for any intertextual errancy, shifting the focus of the story away from his own reading and back to its supposed source; hence the shame of misreading is re-routed to another reader, just as credit for the text is usurped by the narrator whose ironic insistence that the text is not his own underscores the reality that it is, in fact, just that.

The narrator implicitly claims to read Chaucer's text carnally, by the letter; it is for the narrator the letter of the law, the standard and true source, the origin. But the narrator sets up the metaphor of carnality in order to transgress the letter, to transgress the "law" while attending to the problem of allusion. He must transgress the text in order to gloss it; he must usurp Creisseid in order to re-define her, to present her in his own terms. He must transgress the letter of the law in order to gloss it. For the narrator, the transgression entails a movement from light to dark, a movement out of the clear, obvious carnality of literalness into the muddled, confusing polysemy of figurativeness.

By calling attention to his own comparison of Chaucer's text with his own "uther quair," the narrator constructs an image of comparison that evokes not only the core metaphoric paradigm of comparison, but other modes of perception as well. Since epistemology is both limited and made possible by comparison, and definition and understanding are contingent upon the mind's ability to form and to interpret pairs, "difference" must be recognized and exploited polysemously, usurpatively. The narrator reads his own text while forcing comparison with Chaucer's, after calling attention to the necessity of comparison and the limitations of literalness. He thus creates a text that not only supplements Chaucer's story, but competes with it as well; it is part of the story, and yet it is not. In reading Chaucer, Henryson's narrator usurps Chaucer's text, "myswrit[ing]" it perhaps by complementing it--a possibility which Chaucer's narrator predicts:

> Go, litel book, go, litel myn tragedye,
> Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
> So sende myght to make in som comedye!
> . . . .
> So prey I God that non myswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge.
> And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,
> That thow be understonde, God I biseche! (5.1786-98)

Chaucer's narrator's concern here seems to be that once the text is beyond his control it will be contaminated, corrupted, transgressed. His fears are, of course,

realized by the work of Henryson's narrator, although it is naive and tyrannical--ironically so, perhaps--of Chaucer's narrator in the first place to desire control over his text after instructing it to "go" and instruct others.

Henryson's narrator takes Chaucer's narrator at his word, and, indeed, repeats the recommendation and instruction in his own final stanza:

> Now, worthie wemen, in this ballet schort,
> Maid for your worschip and instructioun,
> Of cheritie, I monische and exhort,
> Ming not your lufe with fals deceptioun.
> Beir in your mynd this schort conclusioun
> Of fair Cresseid, as I have said befoir;
> Sen scho is deid, I speik of hir no moir. (610-16)

Here, the narrator's rather platitudinous--and perhaps misogynistic--suggestion follows along the same lines as Chaucer's own narrator, that the text be understood, i.e., that its message or didactic be taken as a lesson.

In the final stanza, the narrator again aligns prayer and poetry just as he has in the movement from oratur to chalmer in the opening stanzas: "worschip and instruction." In calling attention to the crucial role of reflection as part of reading, the narrator reminds his audience that interpretation is a dynamic process, that in reading the Testament one must not only bear in his mind the imprint of what has been read but also use that impression to rethink and to reinterpret as new ideas are provoked and new considerations revealed.[20] The alignment

of poetry and prayer in the concluding stanza also provides the reflexive reader with a directive for his reflection: the final alignment serves as a concluding reminder that the two do indeed go hand in hand, that the Pauline theological directive of "letter and spirit" obtains as much for the language of poetry as it does for the language of prayer, and that each elucidates the other "imprentit in the fantasy" of the self-reflexive reader.

Notes

[1]I have elected to use the Gray edition of Henryson's Testament in the preparation of this chapter; although I have included references to the introductory material of the Fox edition, I have found the glossary of the Gray edition more in line with my argument here.

[2]On Bede's edition of Aelfric's De Temporibus Anni, see the introduction to the Denton Fox edition of Henryson's Testament 50-51; the correlation of weather and theme is also examined in Gray, Henryson 165-70.

[3]On juxtaposition as a method of literary analysis ("juxtology"), see Shoaf, "Medieval Studies":

> Juxtology emerges from the ancient epistemology of knowledge by contraries and pursues, by comparisons--be they of thinkers and their ideas or of the minutest items of a text, syllables and even individual letters--the aleatory juxtapositions of minds or of sounds that produce the phenomena of meanings. (23)

[4]Mark C. Taylor, in "Text as Victim," argues the relationship between interpretation and transgression:

> Interpretation is transgression. Transgression is "the action of passing over or beyond. . . ." Interpretation takes place on the boundary, at the border, the threshold, the limen, betwixt 'n between the settled(ing) and the unsettled(ing), the familiar and the strange, the known and the unknown, the inside and the outside. . . . It is a movement which violates, penetrates, fractures. (64-65)

[5]A detailed discussion of Augustine on signs and their relationship to reading, thinking, and writing is provided in Colish, Mirror of Language 7-54. With regard to Augustine's understanding of language as polysemous, see McMahon, Augustine's Prayerful Ascent 106-107.

[6]Edward Nolan's recent book, Now through a Glass Darkly, examines the impact of the Pauline specular

metaphor. See also McMahon, Augustine's Prayerful Ascent 56.

[7]Chaucer's evocation of the imago Dei is strengthed by his citation of Dante's Paradiso at the end of the Troilus; Dante participates in an episode of reflection at the end of Paradiso, arguably a narcissistic one:

> Quella circulazion che sì concetta
> pareva in te come lume reflesso,
> da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,
> dentro da sé, del suo colore stesso,
> mi parve pinta de la nostra effige:
> per che 'l mio viso in lei tutto era messo.
> (33.127-132)
> [That circle--which, begotten so, appeared
> in You as light reflected--when my eyes
> had watched it with attention for some time,
> within itself and colored like itself,
> to me seemed painted with our effigy,
> so that my sight was set on it completely.]

Commentary on this image in Paradiso includes Shoaf, Currency of the Word; K. Taylor; and Pulsiano. On theological considerations of imago Dei in general, see also Leavy; Hoekema.

[8]Geoffrye of Vinsauf comments on the relationship between mirroring and interpretation: "Talis transsumptio verbi / Est tibi pro speculo: quia te specularis in illo" ["Such a metaphorical use of words serves you like a mirror, for you can see yourself in it"]; cited by Leupin, "Absolute Reflexivity" (138). See also J. Allen, Ethical Poetic 200-201.

[9]On Augustine's analysis of "fanatasy," see Edwards, Ratio and Invention 34-35; Montgomery, Reader's Eye:

> Memory allows the mind to contemplate the images of objects after the objects are no longer present to the sight, and memory is so closely related to the imagination as scarcely to differ from it. The image that remains in the memory Augustine calls a "phantasy." "Phantasm," on the other hand, is a term he reserves for something different: it is recovery by ann act of will, not of a sense experience, but of an image constituted in the imagination from other remembered images. A phantasm is thus composite and in part invented, and the operation

that produces it is akin to what was sometimes called "phantasy" inn later medieval concepts of the soul. (31)

[10]Compare with Dante, Paradiso 1.70-72:

> Transumanar significar per verba
> non si poria; pero l'essemplo basti
> a cui esperienza grazia serba.
> [Passing beyond the human cannot be worded; let Glaucus serve as simile--until grace grant you the experience.]

See also K. Taylor 177 and Gellrich 142.

[11]Much has been written on the character of Cresseid in terms of her apparent change; see, for example, Stiller; Strauss; Godman; Craun; Cullen; Nitecki; and, for an overview of recent Henryson scholarship, Fradenburg.

[12]Narcissus and auto-eroticism are discussed by Barkan 49-51; Kristeva, Tales 103-121. Compare, too, the treatment of the "autoerotic" by Dante in Inferno 15.

[13]Modern studies on shame include Kaufman; Schneider. Schneider's application of shame theory to literature includes a discussion of Sartre's useful definition: "Shame is by nature recognition. I recognize that I am as the Other sees me" (25). See also Trible on shame in relation to Adam and Eve's transgression (118-119).

[14]Stiller notes,

> If Chaucer's narrator falls in love with her [Cresseid] in the course of the poem, Henryson's is possessed by her. . . . We see from the beginning of the work that the protagonist is a split character, consisting of Cresseid herself and the narrator, a "parallel" voice who seems [according to Lazar] "a perfectly orthodox follower of the code of fine amour . . . also, like January, a figure illustrating the folly, self-delusion, and sterility of lust." Like Cresseid, he is "both sympathetic and sinful, so that we must condemn him at the same time that we see him to be like us." It is Cresseid who takes on the narrator's sins, as it were, those of "courtly love and of concupiscence," which are identical, to Henryson. (91)

The narrator's own sexual ambivalence seems to follow along the lines of St. Paul; Bergmann notes,

> In St. Paul's writings, all forms of sexuality are condemned with a ferocity encountered neither among the Jews nor among the Greeks. . . . St. Paul condemns with equal severity the worship of idols, adultery, homosexuality, and masturbation. (94)

Other commentary regarding ambivalent attitudes towards sexuality in the Middle Ages includes Fisher, Sexual Images 3-4; Turner, Body and Society 124-129; McMahon, Augustine's Prayerful Ascent 90-92.

[15]See Ovid, Metamorphoses X; Bergmann notes,

> What is tragic in the story of Narcissus has a happy ending in Pygmalion. . . . Narcissus and Pygmalion were both narcissists, but while Narcissus could not even love Echo, Pygmalion can love his own creation. (66)

[16]On the role of shame/humility in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, see Shoaf, Poem, esp. 63-64, 73-76; Howard, Three 230-41; Howard, "Structure" 206-8; Barron 82-112; Green 193-4. See also Braswell's study of penitence and the role of Christian humility.

[17]On self-love and its complex role in Christianity, see Colish, Mirror of Language:

> Love of self, [Augustine] says, can be understood in the interaction of the soul, its knowledge, and its love. The soul must know itself before it can love itself, and, concurrently, it must possess the desire of a lover in order to seek self-knowledge in the first place. (50)

See also Kristeva, Tales:

> It is thus love of one's own self as one's own good that determines and directs other consecutive loves. This love of "one's own self," however, should be conceived only as participation in ontological good, which obviously refers to God. . . . Thus without access to one's own good there can be no access to God. Without self-love, no love for God can be perceived or thought, and consequently, no gift of love to others. (174, 176)

And O'Donovan:

> Self-love is evil only when the self is imperfectly understood and conceived of as an independent item apart from the rest of the universe. A true self-love, a self-love based on true self-knowledge, must coincide with love-of-God because it involves a love of the whole of which self is understood to be a part, the love of Being itself instead of love

> restricted to the self's artificially individuated being. (147)

[18]See also Ezech.3.1; Augustine's conversion instructions, "Take it and read," arguably echo the biblical "take it and eat" instructions. The text read by Augustine at the conversion is, of course, an anti-carnal Pauline epistle, Rom.13.13: "non in comissationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudicitiis, non in contentione et aemulatione" [". . . not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy. . . ."]. See also Miles, Augustine on the Body:

> This tension between "flesh" and "spirit" which became such a powerful formulation of man's existence for Augustine expresses an existential, psychological dualism, and in moving to this concrete historical model of human being, Augustine, like Paul, went beyond a philosophical or metaphysical definition. . . . This dichotomy between the spiritual and all phases of bodily existence which informs Augustine's anthropology is a contemporaneous development with his immersion in the theology of St. Paul; it is a dichotomy which has as its characteristic image in the mature Augustine that of a long journey along a "darkening highway." (34)

[19]See also Gellrich 120.

[20]Goldberg notes,

> The "endlesse worke" of narration entails continuous revision; the narrator's work is never done, and neither is the reader's. Both come to occupy the same place in supplying the text and being located in the inability to fill satisfactorily that textual demand. (73)

The comment is made in reference to Spenser's Faerie Queene, but it seems appropriate for Henryson's Testament as well.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Catherine S. Cox received a B.A., in English, from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania in 1985; an M.A., in English, from the University of Florida in 1987; and was admitted to doctoral candidacy at the University of Florida in 1989.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

R.A. Shoaf, Chairman
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ira Clark
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Marie Nelson
Associate Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John Perlette
Associate Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Carol Lansing
Assistant Professor of History

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dean, Graduate School